

The Finite Mind: A Phenomenological Study of Samuel Taylor Coleridge

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

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Abstract

This thesis examines the philosophical writings of Samuel Taylor Coleridge through the lens of several major thinkers in the European phenomenological tradition, illustrating a considerable overlap in their arguments, methods and aims, and arguing for a retrospective consideration of Coleridge's philosophical significance as a distant forerunner to this tradition. A major part of this analysis involves an extended analysis of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, examining numerous parallels between his conception of the imagination and Edmund Husserl's notion of intentionality: the ability for the mind to direct itself towards objects in order to meaningfully comprehend them. This connection between imagination and intentionality will then form the basis for an interpretation of Coleridge's vision of a philosophical form of poetic criticism as based on the same principles of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology: apprehending the essential features of consciousness that contribute to the constitution of subjective experience. Additionally, further parallels will also be drawn between Coleridge's thought and that of later phenomenologists such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Emmanuel Levinas. In connection to the former, it will be shown how Coleridge's notion of 'double touch' offers a significant analogue to Merleau-Ponty's embodied consciousness, offering a productive way of understanding the intersection between ethics and epistemology in his thought. With regards to the latter, the focus will be placed on Coleridge's incomplete theological and metaphysical work the *Opus Maximum*, utilising a Levinasian conceptual schema of the interplay between totality and infinity to explore themes of conscience and otherness. Overall, these various analyses frame Coleridge's philosophy as a series of interrelated attempts to articulate a systematic account of human consciousness in its relation to itself, the world, and to God, which taken together offer a valuable opportunity for reevaluating his status as a philosophical figure.

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Abbreviations

<i>Aids</i>	<i>Aids to Reflection</i> . Edited by John Beer. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
<i>BL</i>	<i>Biographia Literaria or Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions</i> . Edited by James Engell and Walter Jackson Bate, 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1983.
<i>CL</i>	<i>The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge</i> . Edited by Earl Leslie Griggs, 6 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1956-71.
<i>CN</i>	<i>The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge</i> , 5 vols. a) I-II edited by Kathleen Coburn. New York: Pantheon Books, 1957. b) III edited by Kathleen Coburn. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973. c) IV edited by Kathleen Coburn and M. Christensen. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990. d) V edited by Kathleen Coburn and Anthony J. Harding. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990-2002.
<i>Friend</i>	<i>The Friend</i> , edited by Barbara E. Rooke, 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1969.
<i>LL</i>	<i>Lectures 1808-1819 on Literature</i> . Edited. by R.A. Foakes, 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1981.
<i>LS</i>	<i>Lay Sermons</i> . Edited by R. J. White. London: Routledge, 1972.
<i>Logic</i>	<i>Logic</i> . Edited by J. R. de J. Jackson. London: Routledge, 1981.
<i>Marginalia</i>	<i>Collected Marginalia</i> , 6 vols. a) I-II edited George Whalley, 1980-4; b) III-V edited by H. J. Jackson & George. Whalley, 1992-2001. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980-2001.
<i>OM</i>	<i>Opus Maximum</i> . Edited by Thomas McFarland & Nicholas Halmi, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.
<i>SW&F</i>	<i>Shorter Works and Fragments</i> . Edited by H. J. Jackson and J.R. de J. Jackson, 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1995.
<i>TT</i>	<i>Table Talk Recorded by Henry Nelson Coleridge (and John Taylor Coleridge)</i> . Edited by Carl Woodring, 2 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Introduction

In Samuel Taylor Coleridge's marginalia on Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, the final note begins with the following remark: 'The perpetual and unmoving Cloud of Darkness, that hangs over this Work to my "mind's eye", is the absence of any clear account of — was ist Erfahrung [what is experience]?'¹ To anyone familiar with Kant's philosophy, this question is bemusing, since it appears to ignore one of the central themes of his work: the rational deduction of the necessary conceptual capacities that make experience possible. To anyone familiar with Coleridge's philosophy, on the other hand, it is clear that he understood Kant far too well to not be aware of this. Presuming, then, that this question doesn't arise from basic ignorance, it is worth considering what Coleridge means by it. The Kantian response, briefly stated, would be that experience is a mental representation produced by an act of judgement that synthesises the mind's inherent concepts with passively received sensory data. The continuation of Coleridge's note demonstrates familiarity with this explanation, posing the further question '[w]hat do you mean by a *fact*, an empiric Reality, which alone can give solidity (*inhalt*) to our Conceptions?' In order to understand the significance of this second question, one must consider the broader context of Kant's project in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. This project constitutes a strict trial of reason, by reason, testing its ability to discover truth by its own lights without appeal to any other faculty or to the external world.² These restrictions mean that Kant's account superimposes the purely formal qualities of the mind, those that can be deduced *a priori* by reflecting on the necessary conditions for cognition. Returning to Coleridge's question, a more standard translation of Kant's term '*Inhalt*' would be 'content'³, denoting the structural opposite to these formal elements: that which is given shape and form through the application of concepts. Together with the first question - was ist Erfahrung? - it becomes clear that the answer Coleridge seeks is one that allows for this content itself to become an

¹ *Marginalia* III, p.248.

² This reflexive assessment of reason arises from an intellectual climate which, particularly in continental thought, is characterised both by extreme faith and extreme scepticism in its scope and capabilities. For a general overview of this context cf. Frederick Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (London: Harvard University Press, 1993). For an exploration of how this discourse subsequently influenced Coleridge cf. Richard Berkeley, *Coleridge and the Crisis of Reason* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007).

³ This is how it is translated in the authoritative English translation by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood

object of philosophical scrutiny too, rather than simply serving as an *et cetera* to the transcendental operations of formal cognition.⁴

The reason for beginning in this rather technical manner is to pinpoint a dominant philosophical theme that will guide the rest of this study. Far from demonstrating a lack of comprehension, what Coleridge's note indicates is a specific philosophical concern for a dimension of experience that Kant's formal account pulls back from: content as it is experienced by a subject of consciousness — in a word, phenomenology.⁵ What follows is an attempt to trace this concern throughout a range of Coleridge's writings, centring around his attempt to conceive a transcendental system of poetic composition and critique in *Biographia Literaria* (1817). Accordingly, it is from the culminating moment of *Biographia*'s first volume - the definition of the primary imagination - that the title of this study originates: '[t]he primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM.'⁶ In this moment, by declaring the human mind's finitude in relation to the infinite mind of God, Coleridge performs a remarkably double-edged philosophical manoeuvre, attempting to secure a relation with the divine through the common possession of a mind, but simultaneously emphasising the insoluble difference between finite and infinite intelligence. This manoeuvre is emblematic of an extremely fertile philosophical insight: that if the human mind is essentially finite then it can, at least in theory, become comprehensible to itself. This insight is carried all the way through to Coleridge's final, unpublished philosophical work, the *Opus Maximum*, where he declares that 'the faculty of the finite... makes experience possible.'⁷ In contrast to the infinity of the divine mind, which for Coleridge forces philosophical thought to share responsibility with religion and faith, the finitude of the human mind provides the impetus for a systematic attempt to apprehend the nature of consciousness.

Approaching consciousness through its relation to these deeper metaphysical and theological considerations allows for a productive exploration of one of the major ambivalences in Coleridge's

⁴ cf. *BL I* (pp.155-6) 'He [Kant] confined the whole *plastic* power to the forms of intellect, leaving for the external cause, for the *materiale* of our sensations, a matter without form, which is doubtless inconceivable'.

⁵ Whilst the term 'phenomenology' can be used in this more general sense to describe the lived quality of an experience, it is also frequently used to denote a specific tradition of twentieth-century continental philosophy. Since this study proposes primarily to examine Coleridge's relationship with phenomenology in this latter sense, the term 'proto-phenomenology' will be used throughout as an acknowledgement of historical difference, whilst the more general sense will be covered through terms such as 'experience', 'lived experience' and 'consciousness'.

⁶ *BL I*, p.304.

⁷ *OM*, p.86.

philosophical writing. On the one hand, he frequently demonstrates an exceptionally meticulous level of attention to minute features of experience, even by the high standard of his Romantic contemporaries.⁸ On the other hand, this is not to say that he necessarily considered experience in itself to be a sufficiently philosophical object of study. This is evident from his vehement opposition to the empirical epistemologies of John Locke and David Hume, whose adherence to sensory reports he lambasts as a crass inability to comprehend proper philosophical principles.⁹ In later philosophical works such as *Aids to Reflection* (1825), which relies heavily on his quasi-Kantian distinction between reason and understanding, this opposition can often come across as an outright hostility to experience¹⁰, but to presume this would be to misunderstand Coleridge's position. The fault of empiricism in his eyes was not that it chose to focus on experience, but that it interpreted this experience as a merely passive form of sensory stimulation. Once experience becomes understood as indicative of a more complicated cognitive and metaphysical picture, as it was by Kant and his successors, including the phenomenological tradition, Coleridge not only demonstrates a willingness to incorporate it directly into his arguments, but also shows a distinct concern to prevent its qualitative content from being ignored or misrepresented.

Despite the rich expanse of philosophical writing surrounding Coleridge, no attempt has yet been made to offer a substantial analysis of how his thought intersects with the phenomenological

⁸ Rei Terada documents how Coleridge 'devoted hours of his life to minute descriptions of optical illusions, hallucinations, and sensory oddities', offering an ideological critique of how the ephemeral nature of these interests offers an escapist bulwark against engaging with real, material social relations ('Phenomenality and Dissatisfaction in Coleridge's "Notebooks"', *Studies in Romanticism*, 43. 2 (2004), 257-281, p. 257). The approach taken here eschews this kind of hermeneutical suspicion to try and construct an account that focuses on what Coleridge sought to discover within experience, rather than on what he may have wanted to avoid.

⁹ 'Time, Space, Duration, Action, Active, Passion, Passive, Activeness, Passiveness, Reaction, Causation, Affinity... Locke and the stupid adorers of the *Fetisch* Earth-clod take all these for granted—' (*CN* II, 3156). See also *BL* I, p.291, *TT*, 179.

¹⁰ 'One of the great purposes of Christianity...[is] to emancipate the Soul from this debasing slavery to the outward senses' *AtR* p.406

tradition.¹¹ The general thesis that Coleridge was engaged in a systematic account of consciousness has been articulated most prominently by Richard Haven¹², but his historicist methodology means that phenomenology, which only appears as a distinct philosophical movement in the early twentieth century, is not mentioned. A similar outline is offered by Mary Ann Perkins, who in one of the more positive interpretations of Coleridge's claims to systematicity states that 'he maintained both the possibility and the necessity of seeking out those underlying laws of consciousness which are the ground and explanation of all knowledge'.¹³ More overtly, Nicholas Reid makes direct reference to 'a Coleridgean phenomenology, [which] far from being mere folk psychology, is well-grounded by the evidence'¹⁴, but opts to utilise the work of neurophysiologists rather than phenomenologists to illustrate this. When specific phenomenologists are referenced in works on Coleridge, this seldom amounts to more than a passing reference, as, for example, when Thomas McFarland offers Edmund Husserl's concept of the 'ego cogito' as a parallel to Coleridge's conception of consciousness. Despite picking up on the fact that 'Coleridge speaks the language of twentieth-century phenomenology'¹⁵, McFarland's comparisons are limited to momentary suggestions and asides rather than developed comparisons. Likewise, Ewan James Jones's philosophical analysis of Coleridge's poetic form contains a handful of references to phenomenological figures such as Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, but these are also tantalisingly brief.¹⁶ The same holds true for works focused on *Biographia*, with Kathleen Wheeler arguing that 'whatever debt Coleridge may have owed to Kant or Schelling ... he certainly

¹¹ In terms of studies that have attempted to give philosophical overviews of Coleridge's work as a whole, John Muirhead's *Coleridge as Philosopher* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1930) appears somewhat too early to address phenomenology as a philosophical movement (although Muirhead's 'Library of Philosophy' series would go on to provide one of the first English translations of Husserl's canonical work *Ideas*), whilst Owen Barfield's *What Coleridge Thought* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972) contains many sections that are implicitly phenomenological (particularly the opening chapter on 'thoughts and thinking') but uses depth-psychology rather than phenomenology as the twentieth century analogue to Coleridge's ideas (p.80). Thomas McFarland's *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) is a notable exception for mentioning phenomenology directly, albeit briefly (see below). Additionally, there is a healthy precedent for trying to bring Coleridge's work into dialogue with twentieth century philosophical movements such as deconstruction in Kathleen Wheeler's *Romanticism, Pragmatism and Deconstruction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993) and Jerome Christensen's *Coleridge's Blessed Machine of Language* (London: Cornell University Press, 1981), Pragmatism in Tim Milnes' *The Truth About Romanticism: Pragmatism and Idealism in Keats, Shelley, Coleridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), and even a form of Wittgensteinian ordinary language philosophy in Stanley Cavell's essay 'Emerson, Coleridge, Kant' (in *Post-Analytic Philosophy*, ed. John Rajchman and Cornell West, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), yet phenomenology remains without any such sustained attention.

¹² Richard Haven, *Patterns of Consciousness: An essay on Coleridge* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1969).

¹³ Mary Ann Perkins, *Coleridge's Philosophy: The Logos as Unifying Principle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p.14.

¹⁴ Nicholas Reid, *Coleridge, Form and Symbol* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p.vi.

¹⁵ McFarland, *Pantheist Tradition*, p.236.

¹⁶ Ewan James Jones, *Coleridge and Philosophy of Poetic Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p.26, 34-5, 36, 112, 204.

transformed them in *Biographia* I into a philosophy of the phenomenology of perception'.¹⁷ Likewise, Frederick Burwick provides a highly phenomenological overview in his remark that 'it is only Coleridge, not Schelling, who describes how the "percipient energies" give form and shape and how the mind discovers this activity in reflection'.¹⁸ What this study aims to demonstrate is how all these suggestions, if taken up into a concerted effort to understand Coleridge's thought through the lens of various phenomenological thinkers, allow for an analysis that, far from merely documenting a scattered collection of commonalities, presents a promising opportunity for reevaluating a constant theme within his work.

One qualification that ought to be emphasised is that the phenomenological framework proposed here makes no claim to encapsulate Coleridge's entire philosophical oeuvre. Seamus Perry wisely warns against 'honourably misguided' attempts 'to improve him into something too unified and coherent'¹⁹, opting instead to survey Coleridge's thought as a series of productive 'muddles'.²⁰ Whilst this approach works well in trying to encompass the vast heterogeneity of Coleridge's corpus, there is still a case to be made that large parts of his thought do in fact possess a considerable level of systematic coherence, a fact which may not become fully clear until they are considered alongside the appropriate kind of system. This extension of interpretive charity should not be taken for an attempt to reopen the vexed question of Coleridge's philosophical originality (or lack thereof)²¹ by highlighting some miraculous prescience which prefigures a collection of arguments made almost a century after his death. The balance to be struck here takes its cue from the phenomenological hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (1960), which advocates what David Haney calls a 'transhistorical conversation' between different horizons of understanding.²² Influenced by Martin Heidegger's analysis of being-in-the-world as a process of

¹⁷ Kathleen Wheeler, *Sources Methods and Processes in Coleridge's 'Biographia Literaria'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p.106.

¹⁸ Frederick Burwick 'Perception and the heaven-descended 'know thyself' in *Coleridge's Biographia Literaria: Text and Meaning*, ed. Frederick Burwick (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989), p.137.

¹⁹ Seamus Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p.2.

²⁰ Ibid., p.7.

²¹ Thomas McFarland's assessment of this question - summarised by his statement that 'in a strict sense no philosopher is original' (*Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition* p.xxix) - still offers the best illustration of why this question is ultimately not worth pursuing. Whilst the well-trodden question of Coleridge's plagiarisms from Schelling will be examined in chapter two, the aim will be to clarify the purpose of such borrowings rather than to offer a defence of Coleridge actions.

²² David Haney, *The Challenge of Coleridge: Ethics and Interpretation in Romanticism and Modern Philosophy* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), p.xii. The notion of a 'horizon', which is first brought to prominence in Husserl's analysis of perception, denotes a limit that fixes and contextualises a given field of content. Perkins attempt to unite the various aspects of the Coleridgean Logos also claims 'allegiance' with Gadamerian principles, amongst others (p.15).

ongoing interpretation shaped by the norms and values of one's environment, Gadamer casts the reader's relation to the text as one which is invariably conditioned by a 'fore-conception': a necessary set of assumptions and prejudices that provide a determinate context for interpretation.²³ Far from being an impediment to a properly 'objective' reading, Gadamerian hermeneutics embraces the dynamic exchange between this fore-conception and the language of a text, the ideal result of which is a 'fusion of horizons' whereby both frameworks undergo mutual change through their interaction. The fore-conception of this study is one that apprehends Coleridge's philosophy as part of an inchoate prehistory of phenomenological thought that is openly recognised by figures within the tradition itself. In his preface to *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), Maurice Merleau-Ponty argues that 'the opinion of the responsible philosopher must be that *phenomenology can be practised and identified as a manner or style of thinking, that it existed as a movement before arriving at complete awareness of itself as a philosophy*'.²⁴ By proposing to situate Coleridge within this genealogy, the aim is not to artificially prop up his thought through anachronistic recourse to a later philosophical movement, but to argue for his retrospective inclusion within the philosophical zeitgeist which would eventually give rise to it.

To apply this notion of a 'fusion of horizons' to a concrete example, one can examine the relationship between two terms that will be integral to the following argument: imagination and intentionality. A common sense way of understanding the imagination would be as a faculty of mental representation, able to provide reconstructions of experience which stand in a derivative relationship to direct perception. Thus, if invited to imagine a house, one might comply by forming a mental image based on a rough approximation of previous perceptual engagements with real houses. A crucial premise of the following analysis will be that this is not how Coleridge intends his use to the term to be understood, evidenced in part by his attribution of a very similar reconstructive function to the accompanying notion of the fancy.²⁵ This negative claim serves to emphasise Coleridge's frustration with the paucity of 'imagination' as a translation for the German term

²³ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinscheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 2006), pp.267-273. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2014), pp.36-49.

²⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2005), p.viii.

²⁵ Cf. Coleridge's reference to 'The image-forming or rather re-forming power, the imagination in its passive sense, which I would rather call Fancy = Phantasy' (CN III, 4066).

Einbildungskraft²⁶, which prompts his deliberations in chapter ten of *Biographia* on the neologism ‘esemplastic’ to try and capture the sense of a faculty much more directly involved with experiential unification.²⁷ All these considerations constitute part of the horizon that greets the reader of *Biographia*, where the precise relationship between ‘imagination’ in the conventional sense and Coleridge’s technical sense of ‘the esemplastic power’ is left indeterminate. Switching to the phenomenological horizon, intentionality, in the Husserlian sense, describes the way in which consciousness is able to direct itself towards objects in the world, how it is possible for a mental event to be ‘about’ that object in the sense that it meaningfully apprehends it objectively.²⁸ In bringing these two horizons together, the technicality of Husserl’s term helps to collapse the ambiguity within Coleridge’s account of the imagination, connecting both to the rest of *Biographia*’s philosophical argument and to Coleridge’s broader views on perception. This does not mean, however, that applying Husserl’s concept onto Coleridge somehow reveals the ‘true’ nature of Coleridgean imagination, as if intentionality were implicit within *Biographia* all along waiting to be discovered, but instead constitutes what Gadamer would call an ‘event’ of meaning that is localised to the hermeneutic moment of bringing the two horizons together.²⁹ Other comparisons made in this study should also be thought of in this manner, as formations of meaning made possible by reading Coleridge’s work within a historical moment that has assimilated the phenomenological tradition.

Attempting to compare Coleridge’s philosophy with phenomenology *tout court* would most likely produce a voluminous, unfocused mass of comparisons that would be almost impossible to unite into a coherent scholarly narrative. Consequently, certain understandings of the term must be prioritised ahead of others, whilst many will be set aside all together. Whilst it would be ponderous to address every idiosyncratic understanding of ‘phenomenology’, the exclusion of two particularly influential uses of the term, those of G.W.F. Hegel and Martin Heidegger, deserves a brief justification due to their particular prevalence. Conversely, the devotion of considerable attention to

²⁶ cf. *Marginalia* III, p.790. For a fuller and far more historical treatment of the term cf. James Engell, *The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), as well as Mary Warnock *Imagination* (London: Faber and Faber, 1976). Warnock’s treatment, although less comprehensive than Engell’s, does discuss both Coleridge and phenomenology, albeit with minimal cross-examination.

²⁷ *BL* I, p.168.

²⁸ A fuller explanation of the specifics of Husserlian intentionality is given in chapter three.

²⁹ ‘Understanding must be conceived as part an event in which meaning occurs, the event in which the meaning of all statements—those of art and all other kinds of tradition—is formed and actualized.’ *Truth and Method* (p.157)

Husserlian phenomenology must also be explained, not only to highlight the key features that make it fruitful, but also to address a number of important limitations with this comparison.

Hegel's use of 'phenomenology' in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) is undoubtedly the most prominent example of the term in Coleridge's lifetime.³⁰ This sense of phenomenology is deeply bound up with Hegel's philosophy of history, describing the ongoing manifestations of consciousness as these develop dialectally over time. Indeed, one cannot really speak of a Hegelian phenomenology as such, since his term doesn't describe a single philosophical framework but rather the evolution of multiple different modes of appearance. A notable consequence of understanding phenomenology as dialectical historical development is that every mode of appearance it considers is invariably revealed to contain an internal contradiction that must be overcome through conflict with another which opposes it. The result of this, as J. N. Findlay notes, is that every individual position is shown to be inadequately philosophical, meaning that Hegel saw the descriptions within the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as 'a forepiece that can be dropped and discarded once the student, through deep immersion in its contents, has advanced through confusions and misunderstandings to the properly philosophical point of view'.³¹ The point of Hegel's phenomenology is not to apprehend consciousness as a specific form of appearance, but to highlight the process of temporal progression within which each individual form occurs and is eventually superseded. This creates an important difference between Hegel's phenomenology and any proto-phenomenological position attributable to Coleridge.³² The most prominent of these is the markedly different ways in which the two conceptualise philosophical history. In contrast to Hegel's presentation of linear upward progression, Coleridge's remarks on the subject tend to emphasise a repetitive circularity, with modern philosophical positions often being framed as repetitions of ancient ones.³³ Whilst Coleridge's concept of 'tautegory' constitutes a late attempt to explain how historically situated symbols can convey eternal, immutable truths, the philosophical emphasis always resides in the

³⁰ Before Hegel, the term originated in a natural scientific context through the optical studies of Johann Heinrich Lambert (1728-1777), where it applied to the appearance of physical objects relative to various external senses. Coleridge himself uses it in this naturalistic context when he speaks of 'phænomenology' in *Friend I*, p.467* and *Logic* p.45*. Cf. Dermot Moran and Timothy Mooney eds., *The Phenomenology Reader* (Routledge: Oxon, 2002) for a fuller history of the term.

³¹ G.F.W. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller, ed. J.N. Findlay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.v.

³² This is not say that the two cannot be interestingly brought together in a broader context, as in Paul Hamilton's *Coleridge and German Philosophy: The Poet in the Land of Logic* (London: Continuum, 2007).

³³ Examples of this his division of thinkers into either Platonists or Aristotelians, his attempt to draw connections between eighteenth century and ancient Greek materialism, and his equation of most major hedonic systems of ethics with epicureanism. See also James Vigus, *Platonic Coleridge* (Oxford: Legenda, 2009), pp.96-8.

latter.³⁴ In this regard, the extent to which one can strictly talk of Coleridge as a ‘dialectical’ thinker is debatable. Whilst his philosophical writings are littered with the terminology of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, Coleridge also includes another term in his formulations: prothesis³⁵, an absolute identity that is prior to the dialectic—divine will, in Coleridge’s case. What makes the Hegelian dialectic a historical process is that its resolution of contradictions gives rise to subsequent oppositions, and is thus driven forward in a process of temporal development. Coleridgean dialectic conversely involves the stabilisation of contradictions, restoring thought into the pre-existent, divinely ordained equilibrium of the Logos rather than driving it forward towards future resolution.³⁶ Accordingly, Hegel’s phenomenology is what one might call a teleo-phenomenology, depicting consciousness as engaged in a purposive movement towards identity with the absolute that is worked out in the fullness of history. Coleridge’s proto-phenomenology concerns itself with the essential ideal laws governing human thought, which exist outside of time and thus have no need of historical realisation. Relatedly, his conception of finitude is immutably fixed beforehand by its relationship with the infinity of God. Whereas Hegel’s dialectical relation to finitude is ultimately one of extrication, postulating a future resolution in absolute spirit, Coleridge’s is one of explication, working out what was always already there to be discovered.

The second sense of ‘phenomenology’ that will be set aside here is Heideggerian phenomenology, of the kind worked out in *Being and Time* (1927). Here the term is understood as a methodological tool in the service of fundamental ontology, providing a framework for exploring the question of the meaning of Being. The value of phenomenology for Heidegger is primarily corrective, as its commitment to the immediacy of things as they appear offers a way to circumvent the conceptual frameworks handed down by the western metaphysical tradition. For Heidegger, phenomenology is not a scientific enterprise searching for universal truths, but a hermeneutical one which must begin as an interpretation of one’s immediate situation. This framework is established through his analyses of, amongst other things, equipment, sociality and death. As Heidegger’s philosophy develops after *Being and Time*, however, he exhibits an increasing doubt that the analysis of any individual existence could provide a sufficient grounding for his ontology. This prompts him to undertake much broader analyses of language, art and technology as supra-individual ways in which

³⁴ Hamilton, *Coleridge and German Philosophy*, pp.103-11.

³⁵ For example in *Aids*, p.178*

³⁶ cf. Perkins: ‘The main themes of Coleridge’s thought are constantly reassessed and modified, yet despite their organic and relational nature he asserted, as their ground, and unchanging Prothetic reality’ (p.9).

the question of Being is shaped and obscured.³⁷ The emergence of language, and particularly poetry, as an important theme in Heidegger's work makes a connection with Coleridge seem intuitively appealing; however, as with Hegel, there are a number of factors that make sustained philosophical comparisons difficult. To take the issue of finitude, for Heidegger this must necessarily be understood as a radical finitude structured by being-towards-death, a uniquely personal relation to a future state of nothingness.³⁸ Coleridge's Christian conviction in the immortality of the soul totally undermines any such relationship, creating an inability to shift from a theological interpretation that, for Heidegger, would represent an inauthentic understanding of death's true existential significance. Mention of Coleridge's theological convictions connects to another, far more prominent, division between his philosophical project and Heidegger's. Heidegger's thought is premised on a rejection of any kind of foundationalism, the belief that philosophy must begin with an absolutely certain principle or proposition which grounds all others. This leads to the formulation of the hermeneutic circle, wherein the philosopher constantly interprets and reinterprets their immediate surroundings without ever locating any absolute ground.³⁹ For a systematic aspirant like Coleridge, abandoning foundationalism in this manner would be tantamount to declaring philosophy intellectually bankrupt⁴⁰; as Tim Milnes has argued, 'the language of foundationalism is important, though often overlooked by modern commentators keen to integrate Coleridge into a western tradition of anti-metaphysical thought'.⁴¹ Moreover, Coleridge's philosophical work is shot through with precisely the metaphysical terminology that Heidegger's phenomenology is designed to circumvent. In particular, the distinction between subjects and objects, which Heidegger's account works especially hard to avoid, is an inextricable feature of Coleridge's philosophical style, and is certainly integral to his theory of the imagination.⁴² It is precisely within the more

³⁷ cf. Martin Heidegger, 'On the Origin of the Work of Art' in *Poetry Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971) and 'The Question Concerning Technology' in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977). The extent to which this development represents a shift away from phenomenology in Heidegger's thought is an issue of some debate. The most prominent exponent of this theory of a 'turn' is William Richardson in *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003). For an opposing view, which argues that Heidegger's development ought to be interpreted as a continuity, cf. Mahon O'Brien, *Heidegger and authenticity: from resoluteness to releasement* (Bloomsbury: London, 2013).

³⁸ *Being and Time*, §§46-53, pp.279-304.

³⁹ *Being and Time*, §2.

⁴⁰ *BL I*, p.142.

⁴¹ Tim Milnes, *Knowledge and Indifference in English Romantic Prose* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.14.

⁴² Whilst it may be argued that Coleridge's later theological work demonstrates a commitment to get beyond the language of subject-object, this still nonetheless takes place within a framework of God as absolute ground, which is about as clear an illustration as one could wish for of Heidegger's notion of the onto-theological tendency of western metaphysics.

traditionally metaphysical forms of phenomenology advocated by Husserl, which Heidegger sought to move beyond, that one finds a far more stable philosophical analogue for Coleridge.

The first point to make about Coleridge and Husserl is that, in contrast to Heidegger, Husserl's much more systematic conception of phenomenology would normally make comparisons with a literary figure much more challenging, yet Coleridge's amphibious identity as metaphysician and poet represents a rare instance where this is actually a boon. Both thinkers possess an unwavering commitment to systematic thought that views philosophy as a rigorous science (in the broad sense of the Latin *scientia*) governed by principles. They also share a firmly non-reductive and anti-naturalistic conception of the mind which conceives of it primarily in terms of cognitive activity rather than sensory passivity. Returning to Coleridge's ambivalent relationship towards experience sketched above, Husserlian phenomenology offers a way of understanding this blend of fascination and antipathy in terms of a distinct systematic project. Often summarised by the mantra 'zu den Sachen selbst!' ['to the things themselves!'], Husserl argues for a radical return to consciousness which devotes itself to a pure description of the ways in which experience is given to the subject. What makes this return to experience different from the empiricism that Coleridge railed against is that it is specifically geared towards the establishment of an *a priori* description. Husserl makes it clear in his preface to *Ideas* (1913) that 'we treat of an *a priori* science ("eidetic", directed upon the universal in its original intuitability), which appropriates, though as pure possibility only, the empirical field of fact'.⁴³ This conception of an 'eidetic' science is influenced by mathematics and geometry, and Husserl even compares the empirical facts of experience to the counters on an abacus, which far from just being visual particulars allow one 'to grasp with insight, and in their pure generality the series 2, 3, 4... as such, pure numbers as such, and the propositions of pure mathematics relative to these, the essential generalities of a mathematical kind'.⁴⁴ Any single fact of empirical experience can, Husserl argues, be seen as indicative of universal features of subjectivity. This interchangeability between the particular and the universal is a prevalent schema within Coleridge's account of poetic practice in the second volume of *Biographia*, and helps to explain how general philosophical principles can be integrated into poetic description.

⁴³ Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. William Gibson, ed. Dermot Moran (London: Routledge, 2012), p.xxxv. Hereafter *Ideas*. All subsequent references use this edition.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Mention of poetic description leads into one of the main differences between Coleridge and Husserl that should be clarified. For Husserl, phenomenology constitutes the first and most fundamental philosophical science, offering a way to build up from the Archimedean point of self-consciousness and lay the foundation for objective investigations in the natural sciences. Husserl argues that since these sciences ground their conceptions of knowledge and evidence in conscious engagements with the world, this necessitates a philosophical critique of the subjective field which makes these epistemic successes possible. This conception of phenomenology, as Dermot Moran explains, ‘aims to describe in all its complexity the manifold layers of the experience of objectivity as it emerges at the heart of *subjectivity*’.⁴⁵ In this respect, Husserlian phenomenology is not vastly different from the proto-phenomenology that Coleridge formulates in *Biographia*, which is premised by a lengthy excursus on the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity and the need to explain the latter by means of the former. The primary difference is that, in *Biographia* at least, Coleridge’s interest lies in grounding the aesthetic success of poetic activity, rather than the epistemic success of scientific activity. A good illustration of the difference between the two outlooks comes in a remark made by Husserl in *Ideas*:

We draw extraordinary profit from ... the gifts of art and particularly of poetry. These are indeed fruits of the imagination, but in respect of the originality of the new formations, of the abundance of detailed features, and the systematic continuity of motive forces involved, they greatly excel the performances of our own fancy.⁴⁶

Poetry is presented here as an untapped repository of phenomenological insights, one which the philosopher can draw on in their more rigorous and systematic analyses of consciousness in general. For Coleridge, the positions would be reversed, with philosophy positioned as the repository of ideal truths that could function as the ground for the poet’s descriptions of particulars. This disparity between Husserl and Coleridge in terms of where they situate their respective analyses of consciousness is itself indicative of a broader philosophical difference similar to that noted in the Heideggerian case. The necessary presence of religion in Coleridge’s philosophy imposes a structural limitation that prevents it from granting consciousness a foundational status in the way Husserl does, since for him this would be to ignore God’s position as an absolute ground. Whilst Husserlian phenomenology does not rule out God, it is characterised by a spirit of radical

⁴⁵ Moran and Mooney (eds.), *The Phenomenology Reader*, p.2.

⁴⁶ *Ideas*, p.137.

methodological autonomy that prevents any kind of theological concept from influencing its interpretation of pure consciousness.⁴⁷ For Coleridge, by contrast, no philosophical enquiry can ever truly be separated from an ultimately religious ground, rendering any claim to genuine autonomy nugatory. Whilst one might be tempted to see this as dogmatic shortcoming, it is important to note that if these issues did not hold such sway in his thinking it is quite plausible that he would have simply reproduced a derivative form of post-Kantian thought. Coleridge's religious convictions thus perform the curious function of simultaneously forcing him to articulate a viewpoint distinct from the post-Kantian alternatives, opening up the very gap which this phenomenological analysis seeks to explore, whilst also placing a definite limit on any attempt to identity this analysis too strongly with that undertaken by later phenomenology.

It should be noted that this study is not intended as a philosophical evaluation of Husserl's arguments and ideas, and relies on a particular understanding of his work to facilitate the various connections being made to Coleridge. The main thing that will probably strike the reader familiar with Husserl about the presentation offered here is the depiction of him as a metaphysical realist, affirming the independent existence of the world beyond consciousness. The reason for adopting this presentation is to draw out a similarly realist strain in Coleridge's thought that informs his resistance to the systems of subjective idealism put forward by post-Kantians like Fichte and the early Schelling. This is not to say that Husserl's philosophy as a whole is realist in this sense, as it is clear in later works such as the *Cartesian Mediations* that he considered himself a transcendental idealist.⁴⁸ In his earlier work, however, Husserl still uses the term 'idealist' to describe his position, but clarifies that '[o]ur phenomenological idealism does not deny the positive existence of the real world and of Nature... [i]ts sole task and service is to clarify the meaning of this world, the precise sense in which everyone accepts it, and with undeniable right, as really existing'.⁴⁹ It is for this reason that much more attention will be devoted to the early Husserl, utilising works such as *Logical Investigations* (1901) and *Ideas*, rather than later works such as *Cartesian Meditations* (1931) and *The Crisis of the European Sciences* (1954). Indications towards more extensive and critical works on these questions have been provided in footnotes, but in general the onus here will be on outlining Husserlian and other phenomenological positions in broader terms to facilitate more detailed analyses of Coleridge's work, which remains the primary focus throughout. In addition,

⁴⁷ *Ideas*, pp.112-3.

⁴⁸ Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorian Cairns (Haag: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1960), p.150.

⁴⁹ *Ideas*, p.xlii.

whilst Husserlian phenomenology will provide the primary analogue in much of the following analysis, other thinkers within the tradition will also be brought in to supplement this. Thus, for example, when it comes to discussing Coleridge's views in embodiment in relation to his notion of 'double touch' in chapter five, the Husserlian perspective will be combined with that of Merleau-Ponty, in particular his quasi-materialist notion of embodied consciousness as a counterbalance to the idealist conception of pure consciousness. Likewise, in the final chapter covering Coleridge's ethico-religious arguments in the *Opus Maximum*, the ethical phenomenology of Emmanuel Levinas, with its supreme focus on the significance of alterity, offers a fruitful way of understanding the radical philosophical implications inherent in the density of Coleridge's later writings.

The opening three chapters of this study will trace the argument running throughout the two volumes of *Biographia Literaria*, reconstructing Coleridge's efforts to transcendently deduce the imagination alongside an extended comparison between this and Husserl's notion of intentionality. By bringing these two concepts together, the goal is to show how Coleridge's poetics are underwritten by a systematic analysis of the ways in which the poet's consciousness achieves the relations with the world that form the basis for poetic creativity. Rather than treat this as epistemological project designed to secure foundation for knowledge through the unification of subject and object, however, the argument will be presented as a phenomenological project designed to describe the aesthetic, qualitative nature of these relations. The first chapter focuses on the critique of David Hartley's associationism in chapters five to eight of *Biographia I*, demonstrating how Coleridge utilises the shortcomings of Hartley's system as a dialectal spur for his own position. Far from being merely a specific dismissal of the system to which he once subscribed, Coleridge's critique performs a much broader function in addressing what he sees as endemic limitations with empirical and materialistic theories of consciousness *per se*. Chief amongst these is the metaphysical issue that such approaches can only offer an account of the mind as it is subject to contingent patterns of cause and effect, rather than its own necessary, internal laws. Coleridge traces the root of this deficiency to the restrictive visual epistemology, encapsulated in his polemic against the 'despotism of the eye'⁵⁰, arguing that this must be abandoned if a properly philosophical account of the mind is to be given. The crux of Coleridge's argument in these sections will be compared throughout to Husserl's critique of psychologism in his early *Logical Investigations*, which presents a strong case against empirical attempts to deduce the laws

⁵⁰ BL I, p.107.

of logic from empirical observation. This comparison serves to highlight another element within Coleridge's argument: the need to establish a strong basis for normativity in mental activity as the foundation of his philosophical poetics. Just as Husserl seeks to show that the necessity which regulates logic cannot be reduced to physical cause and effect, so Coleridge's own nascent account of poetic value likewise requires an account of the mind's activity that is able to meaningfully distinguish productive imagination from idle fancy.

Having introduced Coleridge's combative relationship to empirical materialism, and the issues that this conflict raises, the second chapter considers the influence of German idealism on his thought. This will consist of an analysis of Coleridge's relation to three major German thinkers: Immanuel Kant, J. G. Fichte and F. W. J. Schelling, demonstrating both what Coleridge took from their systems as well as where his thought diverged. The reason for considering both the positive and negative aspects of Coleridge relation to German idealism in this manner is to respond to the assumption, most apparent in critics like Wellek and Fruman, that his relationship to this tradition is derivative at best and distorting at worst. By examining Coleridge's critical marginalia on all three thinkers, this chapter aims to show how, for the most part, Coleridge drew out key ideas from these thinkers whilst retaining considerable reservations about their systems as a whole. Thus, whilst Coleridge may have been enamoured with Kant's account of transcendental apperception, Fichte's insistence on the original spontaneity of the the subject and Schelling's attempt to integrate a theory of consciousness into a corresponding system of natural science, he was every bit as critical of the distinction between phenomena and noumena, the reductionistic tendencies of systematic idealism and the efforts to collapse the distinction between subject and object into an absolute identity. By drawing out these ambivalent relations within the marginalia and elsewhere, one begins to get a much more definite picture of how Coleridge sought to conceptualise the relationship between the subject and the object, as a dynamic connection between an independent, objective reality and an active, spontaneous subject facilitated and maintained by the perceptual-imaginative powers of the human mind. This in turn provides the basis for a close reexamination of Coleridge's borrowings from Schelling within *Biographia*'s philosophical chapters, which take on a different complexion in light of the evident reservations examined in the marginalia. Whilst not intended as an exoneration of Coleridge's plagiarism, this reexamination highlights the fact that his project in the *Biographia* stops importantly short of Schelling's position by refusing to abandon the space of consciousness as a foundation for a philosophical aesthetics.

Chapter three will consist of two main sections, the first of which provides a close reading of *Biographia*'s twelfth and thirteenth chapters, culminating in a phenomenological interpretation of the primary and secondary imagination. It is here that the comparison between Coleridgean imagination and Husserlian intentionality will be most fully realised, illustrating the structural parallels with Husserl's distinction between noesis and noema: the act and the product of consciousness. In conjunction with the reading of Coleridge's relationship to idealism in the previous chapter, this structure of noesis and noema will be used to show how Coleridge's account of the imagination is able to retain its synthetic and unificatory powers without thereby effacing the notion of a mind-independent world. This will then be applied to an examination of the definitions at the end of chapter thirteen describing the imagination in its various modes. In accordance with Coleridge's characterisation that the primary imagination constitutes the 'prime agent of all human perception'⁵¹, the phenomenological reading of this claim will be understood as akin to the Kantian synthesis of the manifold, but with its main function adapted so as to account for the apperception of a finite subjectivity in its relation to a world of concrete objectivity. As for the secondary imagination, this will accordingly be interpreted as the facilitator of discreet subjective relations to the individual objects of perception, charged with structuring and ordering the constantly shifting flow of presentations made possible by the original apprehension of the primary. Additionally, this chapter will also address the hermeneutical challenge posed by Coleridge's failure to provide a complete transcendental deduction, arguing that the severity of this shortcoming can be substantially mitigated if one considers the groundwork laid out in earlier chapters. The second section will then move on to analyse a selection of the poetic and critical sections in *Biographia*'s second volume. Retaining the framework of imagination as a form of creative intentionality with its own noetic-noematic structure, this section will map this framework onto Coleridge's account of the interrelated nature of poets and poetry, which refines these more general features to give a precise account of the imagination as it is exercised by great poets. Having established these principles, attention can then be turned to the ways in which Coleridge applies them to his treatments of Shakespeare and Wordsworth, with the former functioning as a paradigm of when principle and practice harmonise whilst the latter is held up as a cautionary example of where they risk coming apart.

⁵¹ *BL* I, p.304.

Chapter four explores the theme of suspension in Coleridge's philosophical and critical prose, most notably his account of the willing suspension of disbelief in *Biographia II*, and how this relates to parallel themes in Husserl's phenomenological methodology. The aim here is to provide a genealogy of this concept that charts its development through the *Lectures on Literature*, *The Principles of Genial Criticism*, *Biographia* and finally the *Logic*. The various iterations of suspension contained within these texts will be compared to several key features of the phenomenological *epoché*, a form of suspension that is central to Husserl's project of transcendental phenomenology. The parallel with this highly technical form of suspension allows for a sense of the ways in which Coleridge's own account of suspension likewise contains the potential to operate as an important part of the philosophical system sketched in previous chapters. A key development to be charted in Coleridge's thinking about suspension concerns its evolution from a descriptive account of theatrical engagement in the *Lectures* through to a progressively more prescriptive account in the *Principles of Genial Criticism* and *Biographia*, reflecting Coleridge's increasing awareness of its potential to afford access to particular kinds of philosophical insight. Accordingly, this interpretation will push for a much more exclusive understanding of the suspension of disbelief, shifting it from a universalising account of fictional engagement *tout court* to a specific form of critical disposition intended to harmonise with the specific phenomenological goals of Coleridge's critical project. An important supplement to this revaluation of suspension's ultimate function in *Biographia* is a further examination of its notable reappearance in the *Logic*, where it is presented a form of 'negative idealism' that utilises many of the same features as the 'negative faith'. By showing how Coleridge adapts this notion into a highly specific form of pedagogical receptivity, designed to prepare the mind for an apprehension of the essential laws of logic, this section helps to fully realise the more prescriptive elements that operated somewhat more latently in its previous incarnations.

Chapter five examines Coleridge's intriguing notion of 'double touch'. This is a concept that appears many times within the letters and notebooks without a committed exposition ever manifesting within a published work. By bringing these various fragments together and viewing them under a phenomenological lens, it becomes evident they contain some of Coleridge's most sophisticated thinking about the intersection of psychology, physiology, and ethics represented by the phenomenon of human embodiment. As mentioned above, this shift into a more corporeal realm creates the opportunity to expand the range of available phenomenological comparisons, allowing for the introduction of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's work on embodied consciousness. In addition to

offering a general theoretical backdrop to contextualise double touch as a form of proprioceptive awareness, Merleau-Ponty's work also provides a number of salient illustrations of various embodied phenomena, including work drawn from post-war studies of the 'phantom limb' occurring in amputees, that help to give a much fuller account of its specific operations. This will then provide the groundwork for exploring the connection that Coleridge evidently sought to establish between double touch and volition, positioning it as an important component in repudiating the moral implications of necessitarian thinking. This allows for a reintroduction of Husserlian thinking into the frame, albeit of a much later kind to the material used previously, which examines the phenomenological roots of judgement in relation to the subject's corporeal situation within an affective world of external stimuli. By combining this account with the ongoing analysis of double touch, its fully fledged function within Coleridge's own system can become realised, demonstrating how passive processes of receptivity can nonetheless create the foundation for autonomous, rational judgement.

The final chapter will turn to the unpublished manuscript of Coleridge's *Opus Maximum*, exploring the ways in which, even in one of his most esoteric and speculative works, phenomenological themes nonetheless still manifest within his account of the genesis of conscience. This builds off a number of remarks made by Coleridge that far from being a by-product of presentational consciousness, conscience ought to be considered as a more primordial phenomenon that, conversely, provides the precondition for this consciousness. Although this theme appears in prior works such as *Aids to Reflection* and the *Essay on Faith*, it is only in the *Opus* that Coleridge offers an account of how this precedence of conscience over consciousness can be traced back to formative intersubjective experiences that occur between mother and child. What makes Coleridge's analysis of conscience particularly noteworthy in these sections is a shift in his focus towards the element of alterity that lies at the heart of intersubjective experience, a factor which introduces a hard limit to any phenomenological analysis predicated on consciousness as a realm of presence. This allows for a continuation of the diversification in phenomenological figures initiated in the previous chapter, allowing in this instance for the introduction of Emmanuel Levinas's work on the irreducible alterity inherent within all ethical relations. In particular, Levinas's central notion of the 'face' of the other — the fragile and ambiguous boundary between the self and the other — offers a way of conceptualising Coleridge's account of a very literal face to face interaction between mother and child in terms of a seminal restriction placed upon the senses that creates the condition for the possibility of considering oneself as a responsible moral agent. In addition to grounding the self's

sense of ethical agency in this manner, Coleridge's account of the mother child relation also has profound ramifications for his conception of perception and reason, both of which take on a new significance in light of his analysis of alterity. The significance for perception ties into the principle of conscience preceding and conditioning consciousness, and concerns the way in which the most basic sense of externality, of a world that is otherwise to the self, is equally reliant on the first contact with the otherness of the mother. In the case of reason, the introduction of an unknowable element of alterity lays the ground for one of Coleridge's most central philosophical commitments: the incommensurability of rational truths with the presentations of the senses. Taken in conjunction, the developments of these themes via the analysis of intersubjective alterity feed back into the system of proto-phenomenological poetics outlined in the first four chapters of this study, as they help to give a deeper context to Coleridge's notion of how the poetic symbol might become capable of conveying invisible truths within a representational medium.

A final point to make before beginning concerns the absence of attention paid to poetry, as one might well assume that an account of Coleridge as a proto-phenomenologist would involve interpretations of the literary output for which he is best known as a treasure trove of insights about the nature of human consciousness. Whilst there is every reason to believe that reading Coleridge's poetry in this way could be a rewarding literary critical enterprise, there are also good reasons for sticking to the philosophy in the first instance. One such reason relates to an argument made by Kelvin Everest, who argues for the inverse case of keeping Coleridge's philosophy out of consideration when reading his poetry:

The discourse of philosophy requires a vigorous control of the semantic field that its vocabulary activates. Poetic discourse usually works under a different kind of control, significance in poetry is not absolutely determined within a given logical structure, but allows for relationships between words that may constitute statements not consistent with 'argument'. It is an endless and fruitless endeavour to read Coleridge's poetry as if it were philosophy; the poetry contains statements of philosophical conviction, certainly, but they cannot be evaluated as such within a poetic context.⁵²

⁵² Kelvin Everest, *Coleridge's Secret Ministry* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1979), p.200.

While there is a lot that one might question about this argument, it gets enough right to be worthy of consideration. Even if one is suspicious of Everest's attempt to rigidly demarcate philosophy and poetry, he is certainly correct that the semantic fluidity of poetry leaves it poorly suited for extracting clear claims in favour of a particular philosophical position. The opposite principle, concerning philosophy's 'vigorous control of the semantic field', will be relied on quite heavily in chapter two, which at points will aim to show how the change of a single word or phrase in Coleridge's plagiarisms of Schelling can be interpreted as indicative of fairly substantial philosophical differences. Even if one broadly accepts these principles, it is still legitimate to ask about why a total moratorium on poetry has been chosen, especially given the healthy precedent for philosophical analyses of Coleridge to include productive forays into his poetry.⁵³ This intertextual style of criticism has definite merit insofar as it is able to demonstrate the continuity of Coleridge's concerns through his different modes of writing, but the scope of the current project is somewhat different. The decision to focus solely on philosophical works reflects a key conviction in the following argument, which is that Coleridge did not locate the aesthetic value of poetry in its autonomy from rational, philosophical discourse. On the contrary, his desire to articulate a philosophically grounded mode of literary criticism is indicative of his belief that this value is inextricably tied up with a conscious attempt to mediate and communicate philosophical ideas. Moreover, since the aim here is to show how the various parts of Coleridge's system relate to one another, it is preferable that this should remain as singular a focus as possible to assist in the preservation of clarity. In choosing to explore the philosophical structure of Coleridge's thought without recourse to the usual touchstones of the poetry, it will hopefully be shown how this structure contains more than enough richness, complexity and challenge to be considered entirely in its own right.

⁵³ To name just a few examples, Perry concludes *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* with a coda on *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Vigus's examination of Platonic themes includes a reading of *Kubla Khan*, and Stephen Bygrave's *Coleridge and The Self: Romantic Egoism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1986) does the same with *Frost at Midnight*.

I - Anti-psychologism and Ideal Laws in *Biographia* I

i - Psychologism, Aesthetic Criticism and Phenomenology

The first half of this study will offer a phenomenological reading of the argument running through *Biographia Literaria*, demonstrating how Coleridge's conception of the imagination can be understood as a form of intentionality, and what effect this has on his vision for a new poetics. For all its reliance on the language and concepts of epistemology and metaphysics, *Biographia* will be treated here as a work of aesthetics, one which attempts to 'furnish a torch of guidance to the philosophical critic; and ultimately to the poet'.¹ This new kind of poetic critique aims to import the systematic rigour of transcendental philosophy into the field of literary criticism, replacing 'arbitrary dictation and petulant sneers' with 'fixed canons of criticism, previously established and deduced from the nature of man'.² This enterprise hinges on Coleridge's centralisation of the imagination, not just as it relates to poetry but also to the whole gamut of human consciousness. In distinguishing this sense of imagination from the fancy, the former becomes constitutive rather than merely reconstructive, contributing to experience as it happens rather than simply reassembling it afterwards. In order to pave the way for a fuller account of the relationship between imagination and intentionality, it is important to devote some attention to the steps that Coleridge takes leading up to his attempted deduction. As such, this chapter will analyse the sustained attack on David Hartley's associationist psychology, described by David Krell as 'one of the grandparents of contemporary phenomenological and "humanistic" psychological critiques'.³ As well as offering Coleridge the opportunity to distance himself from a position he once passionately identified with, these sections also perform an important function in illustrating the reasons why an ideal, philosophical account of the mind must be at the root of any account of the imagination. Being well aware of the philosophical predisposition of his British audience, Coleridge's engagement with associationism anticipates the assumption that the appropriate framework for his endeavour will be empirical and material. Before any transcendental argument can even get underway, therefore, the attack on Hartley serves as a demonstration of the various problems that these two philosophical systems - empiricism and materialism - raise in the analysis of the mind.

¹ *BL* I, p.85.

² *Ibid.*, p. 62. For a discussion of the epistemological considerations operating in the background of this endeavour cf. Milnes, *Knowledge and Indifference*, pp.144-74.

³ David Krell, *Of Memory, Reminiscence, and Writing: On the Verge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 85.

Hartley's *Observations on Man* makes little secret of the fact that it is not written as a work of systematic philosophy. 'I cannot,' Hartley proclaims in the preface, 'be called a System-maker, since I did not first form a System, and then suit the Facts to it, but was carried on by a Train of Thoughts from one thing to another, frequently without express Design'.⁴ Much of the *Observations* bears this out, with long sequences miscellaneously applying the theory of vibrations — which claims that all mental activity can be reduced to chains of material vibration — to cognitive and perceptual faculties. Whilst many of these applications draw some amount of support from rudimentary physiology, when it comes to fine-grained differentiations of mental activity Hartley admits that 'it seems impossible to trace out these Communications anatomically, on account of the great Softness of the Brain, we must content ourselves with such Conjectures as the Phænomena shall suggest'.⁵ Whilst to the younger Coleridge such limitations would have seemed surmountable in the fullness of scientific progress, to a more critical reader they raise serious questions.⁶ The admission that empirical evidence for the theory of vibrations may be lacking illustrates that, far from being a strict derivation from available facts, the theory is often presupposed as an explanation that future experiments are expected to confirm. Thus, despite being presented as a series of observations, Hartley's work frequently steps well beyond this in its scope. Whilst he might be reticent to adopt the title of systematiser, Hartley envisions that 'by pursuing and perfecting the Doctrine of Association, we may some time or another be enabled to analyse all that vast Variety of complex Ideas, which pass under the name of ideas of Reflection, and intellectual Ideas, into their simple compounding Parts *i.e.* into simple ideas of Sensation'.⁷ Statements like this reveal the much more wide ranging ambitions of associationism: the provision of a complete account of mental activity united under a single hypothesis. Given Coleridge's own systematic ambitions in *Biographia*, it is unsurprising that he would want to question the sufficiency of this grand materialist reduction.

Coleridge's arguments against associationism share a number of goals and strategies with the critique undertaken by Husserl in his early *Logical Investigations*, which aims to demonstrate the

⁴ David Hartley, *Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty, And his Expectations*, ed. Theodore Huguelet (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1966), p.vi. Hereafter *Observations*.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.19.

⁶ For a discussion of the intersection of Coleridge's youthful enthusiasm for Hartley with his poetic and political convictions cf. Steven Prickett, *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Poetry of Growth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) as well as Nigel Leask, *The Politics of the Imagination in Coleridge's Critical Thought* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1988).

⁷ *Observations*, p.75.

inadequacy of psychology for explaining the laws of logic and mathematics.⁸ Since psychology styles itself as a wholly empirical discipline, it can only make claims about causal relations based on induction which, in Husserl's eyes, renders it insufficiently rigorous to account for the philosophical status of logic. 'If', Husserl argues, 'we take principles from psychology... we shall see only how thought proceeds, and what happens under manifold subjective hindrances and conditions...[which] would only lead to knowledge of merely *contingent* laws...[,] [I]logic, however does not ask after contingent, but after *necessary* laws'.⁹ This distinction between the logical and the psychological, as well as the broader implication of these issues for phenomenological accounts of consciousness, is well summarised by Maurice Natanson:

Without a healthy brain the mathematician may be unable to function, but the regularities of geometry are independent of the brain. Without cigarettes and coffee, the mathematician may be too nervous to concentrate, but algebraic theory has nothing to do with stimulants. So too, though in different and more subtle ways, with the status of consciousness: its logic is free of its physical moorings and resides not in the space of the body but in the timelessness of essence.¹⁰

Logical Investigations is not yet involved in any project of pure phenomenology examining the essential laws of consciousness, but the critique of psychologism nonetheless provides the spur for the transcendental methodology of this later project. The robust defence of an *a priori* analysis of logical and mathematical judgements would go on to form an important part of what Husserl saw as phenomenology's unique potential: the fact that it could engage with consciousness in a way that sought to discover ideal, logically necessary relations within the content of consciousness itself. As well as engaging with the logicians of his own day, Husserl's critique also goes further back 'to the

⁸ There is, in fact, a loose intellectual genealogy that can be traced from Coleridge to Husserl in this respect, since one of Husserl's main targets in the *Logical Investigations* is John Stuart Mill's *Logic* (1843), which owes much of its methodology to an updated form of Hartley's associationism propounded by his father James Mill in *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* (1829). For more discussion of the associationist side of this genealogy cf. C. Craig, *Associationism and the Literary Imagination: From the Phantasmal Chaos*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007). Another coincidental parallel between the two critiques is that they both function as repudiations of their author's previously held convictions, with Coleridge clearly addressing his youthful associationism and Husserl responding in part to an excoriating critique made by Gottlob Frege of his earlier psychologistic work *The Philosophy of Arithmetic* (1891).

⁹ Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, trans. J.N. Findlay (London: Routledge, 2001), p.41.

¹⁰ Maurice Natanson, *Edmund Husserl: Philosopher of Infinite Tasks* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), pp.40-1.

beginnings of modern philosophy, especially Hobbes, Locke, Hume'¹¹, all of whom feature in Coleridge's polemic against associationism. Accordingly, the same pursuit of philosophical legitimacy conferred by logical necessity as opposed to empirical contingency is at the heart of Coleridge's vision for the imagination, driving his convictions that that proper poetic composition must satisfy 'the demands both of taste and of sound logic'¹² and that great poetry contains 'a logic of its own, as severe as that of science'.¹³ Paralleling Husserl's defence of ideality, Coleridge also notes that persons of genius, insofar as they are uniquely well acquainted with the essential operations of their own imagination, 'live... most in the ideal world'.¹⁴ If poetic practice is to get beyond being merely an exchange of idiosyncratic opinions, it must discover a philosophical grounding that can provide an index for aesthetic value. In trying to locate such a grounding in the poet's imaginative engagement with the world, the next step is to provide an account of this imagination that tracks necessary rather than contingent functions. This is precisely what associationism is unable to provide, since it reduces all mental activity to habitual chains of material causes. On this view, the imaginative activity of great poets cannot be meaningfully distinguished from that of anyone else, since both ultimately reduce to so many variants of the same arbitrary associative patterns, leading Muirhead to rightly conclude that 'there was no department in which the defects of the Hartleian philosophy were more glaring than in aesthetic theory'.¹⁵ If, therefore, the poet's work is to be deemed imaginatively successful in a meaningful way, it needs to be understood in relation to a wider philosophical awareness of the mind's essential laws.

A major component of Husserl's critique of psychologism is his distinction between logical and real necessity. Real necessity is a relation described by the physical sciences, and pertains to causal events taking place in space and time, whereas logical necessity would pertain to ideal entities such as numbers and functions as a result of their essential nature.¹⁶ If these two types of necessity are conflated, a logical principle like that of non-contradiction (that a thing cannot both be and not be) would seem to only hold due to the fact that humans are psychologically incapable of thinking

¹¹ Dermot Moran, 'Husserl's transcendental philosophy and the critique of naturalism', *Continental Philosophy Review* 41.4 (2008), 401–425, p.404.

¹² *BL* I, p.45.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.43.

¹⁵ Muirhead, *Coleridge as Philosopher*, p.195.

¹⁶ Thus, for instance, when the younger Coleridge calls himself a 'complete necessitarian' (*CL* I, p.137), and later when he describes himself as having overthrown the doctrine of Association, *as taught by Hartley*... especially the doctrine of necessity' (*CL* II, p.706) he is referring to what Husserl would call 'real' necessity.

otherwise.¹⁷ This implies that the laws of logic are simply habitual patterns of thought which emerge out of the *de facto* constitution of human psychology, meaning that without human minds to ground it there would be no principle of non-contradiction, or indeed any logical laws whatsoever. Husserl finds this conclusion deeply objectionable, and argues that logic operates according to ideal laws which hold irrespective of any psychological factors; in his terms, ‘the psychological logicians ignore the fundamental, essential, never-to-be-bridged gulf... between logical and real necessity’.¹⁸ The confusion, as Husserl sees it, is the assumption that because human comprehension of logical relations must manifest in real psychological cognition, the type of necessity that governs these relations must likewise be wholly psychological. In tracing the historical development of this form of anti-psychologism, R. Lanier Anderson identifies a related concern in Kant’s philosophical project:

Close to the heart of Kant’s complaint against empiricism was a charge that it offered only a theory of the natural laws of cognition – what Kant calls a ‘physiology of the understanding’... Whatever such accounts might show about the way our concepts emerge in fact, they leave untouched Kant’s main question, viz., with what right we can use them to produce justified, objective cognitions.¹⁹

This complaint against physiological psychology is at the heart of Coleridge’s critique of Hartley. In order to elevate the imagination to a position where it might be able to found aesthetic judgement, far more is needed than can be provided by an analysis of its material underpinnings. Whilst Coleridge might not be as directly concerned with Kant’s epistemological question about the objectivity of cognition, a version of this concern is still implicit within his efforts to revise the status of the imagination.

Just as Kant introduces epistemic criteria to the activity of the understanding which can confer justification on the application of concepts, Coleridge seeks to introduce aesthetic criteria that can be applied to the activity of the imagination in order to confer artistic success on its synthetic productions. The problem of psychologism is the same in both instances: a systematic blindness to any normative element that can distinguish a successful cognition from an unsuccessful one. Whilst

¹⁷ This was the view expressed by John Stuart Mill in his *Logic*.

¹⁸ *Logical Investigations*, p.104.

¹⁹ R. Lanier Anderson, ‘Neo-Kantianism and the Roots of Anti-Psychologism’, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 13.2, (2005) 287-323, p.299.

this Kantian presentation of the shortcomings of psychologism is useful for encapsulating Coleridge's specific objections²⁰, the inclusion of a Husserlian perspective helps to get a better sense of what is being offered in its place. Whereas Kant is content to tabulate all the synthetic *a priori* possibilities governing cognition, Coleridge's poetic concerns require him to go a step further. Rather than simply outline the limits of a successful cognition, one that tracks onto truth, the poet bears the deeper task of conveying the realisation of this cognition through their artistic description. Further complexity is introduced when considering the role of the critic, who must be able to judge whether or not this description has been successful. The critic's role thus becomes one of mediation between the philosopher and the poet, assessing the extent to which the necessary structures of thought outlined by the former are manifested in the artistic output of the latter. Unlike the evaluation of a philosophical argument based on the truth and validity of propositional arguments, this kind of evaluation requires the critic to be familiar not just with the range of possible cognitions and the limits of their application, but also their realisation in experience; they must, in sum, be closely acquainted with the phenomenology of imaginative engagements with the world.

The critiques of psychologism examined in this chapter do far more than just reject a particular scientific hypothesis about mental activity, engaging instead with the much broader issue of how consciousness ought to be conceptualised philosophically. Despite considering Hartley's material hypotheses to be outdated in terms of anatomical science, Coleridge's critique is of a much more conceptual nature, contesting the sufficiency of using any material framework as a complete explanation for mental phenomena. Whilst Hartley doesn't go so far as to deny mental phenomena exist, his approach effectively relegates them to being epiphenomenal byproducts of material events taking place in the brain and nervous system. Dermot Moran identifies a version of this opposition running throughout Husserl's work, noting how the 'naturalization of consciousness' ... misconstrue[s] egoic consciousness by treating it as a residue item or 'tag-end' ... within the world, rather than recognising subjectivity as a transcendental condition for the possibility of objectivity and worldhood as such.²¹ Inverting the view of consciousness as a mere 'residue', what Coleridge would call a 'caput mortuum'²² [worthless remains], is a crucial step in the identification of the

²⁰ As Vigus notes (pp.40-1) another important element that Kant introduces to Coleridge's thinking on these issues is the logical sense of the *a priori* - that which is presupposed by experience - as opposed to the historical sense - that which precedes experience temporally.

²¹ Moran. 'Husserl's transcendental philosophy', p.402.

²² *BL* I, p.117.

imagination as ‘the prime agent in all human perception’.²³ Not only does it allow for a systematic analysis that examines the imagination in terms of ideal, logical necessity, but also for an account of how the imagination actively contributes to the ongoing flow of experience. Viewed from this perspective, the productions of the imagination would become amenable to a form of poetic representation that could be evaluated, at least in part, on the basis of their philosophical merit insofar as they encapsulate essential features of mental activity.

Despite criticising the causal, material hypotheses of associationism, Coleridge is not denying that human thought is subject to material causality. This much can be inferred from his excoriating overview of the state of English literary culture, wherein he remarks that ‘[a] debility and dimness of imaginative power, and a consequent necessity of reliance on the immediate impressions of the senses... render the mind liable to superstition and fanaticism’.²⁴ This makes it quite clear that certain mental phenomena are adequately accounted for by sensory impressions brought about by external causes. It is precisely this purely externalised relation, with no interjection or adjudication from internal moderating influences, that produces pathological outcomes. This is a theme that Coleridge returns to on a number of occasions, demonstrating how states of mind that admit only of a causal, material analysis are often characterised by a breakdown of internal ordering. To bring this back to *Biographia*’s wider aims, the desire to define and distinguish the imagination and the fancy comes coupled with the assumption that imaginative success can operate as an index for poetic success, and that this success is analysable in terms of ideal laws. As far as these particular aims are concerned, *Biographia* remains largely ambivalent about the possibility of any particular material analogue for this process. In his later *Logic*, Coleridge declares that,

for aught that we are here concerned with, thought may be the mere result of an organisation; the brain may be an organ for the secretion of the mind... or the aggregate of ideas, conceptions, and images may be founded in vibrations, either of strings, or of a tremulous fluid, permeating on strings. With all this the logician has as little to do as common sense has; sufficient for him that thoughts are thoughts and that the laws by which they act are laws of thought.²⁵

²³ *BL* I, p.304.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.30.

²⁵ *Logic*, p.37. See also *BL* I where Coleridge states (taking from Schelling) that ‘the transcendental or intelligential philosopher is... anxious to preclude all interpolation of the objective into the subjective principles of his science, as for instance the assumption of impresses or configurations in the brain’ (p.258).

Biographia's criticisms of associationism ought to be thought of in the same terms as this, engaging primarily with what associationist hypotheses leave out - an account of thought both as it is governed by transcendental conditions and how it is experienced by the subject.

ii - Thoughts and things

In *Biographia*'s second chapter Coleridge states that, in heightened states of imagination, 'the mind is affected by thoughts, not things'²⁶; he then goes on to cite the same distinction when introducing his potted history of associationism, arguing that any theory concerned with explaining the grounds of perception cannot 'alter the natural differences'²⁷ between these two categories. Both of these statements risk giving the impression that in trying to challenge the materialist view of the mind Coleridge seeks to isolate thoughts from the influence of material causality by taking refuge in a form of mind-body dualism. This is a position to which Coleridge would have never subscribed, declaring later on that 'the whole system of dualism...has long been exploded'.²⁸ As such, it is important that his use of this distinction between thoughts and things be examined more closely as it has a bearing on how the criticisms of Hartley in *Biographia* ought to be understood. Rather than promoting a Cartesian segregation of bodies and minds, thoughts and things map more closely onto the previous discussion about ideality and reality as different ways of understanding necessary relations. Thus, far from being an anxious effort to naively safeguard thought against material forces this distinction should instead be seen as an attempt to do quite the opposite, to fully integrate thought into a causal relation with the external world without erasing its distinctive features.

Coleridge's use of the thought-thing distinction significantly predates *Biographia*. In a notebook entry of 1806, the two categories are presented as ends of a continuum, along which the human mind oscillates in its efforts to understand itself:

[P]assing to and fro from the one to the other Thought, Things, necessary possibilities, contingent Realities... the [centre of the circle]²⁹ is I which is articulated Breath drawn

²⁶ *BL* I, p.31.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.90.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.129.

²⁹ These parentheses represent where Coleridge has used pictorial representations in place of words.

inward, the [circumference of the circle] is the same sent outward, the [conjunction of centre and circumference] or Theta expresses the synthesis and coinstantaneous reciprocation of the two Acts.³⁰

Insofar as this distinction is dualistic, it is a dualism of perspectives rather than substances, one that ultimately stands to be harmoniously united. Although the syntax here is somewhat ambiguous, it is plausible that each pair of descriptions corresponds to the original pairing of thoughts and things. As such, thoughts would be connected with ‘necessary possibilities’ and ‘I which is articulated breath drawn inward’, whilst things would be connected with ‘contingent realities’ and ‘the same [breath] sent outward’. The phrase ‘necessary possibilities’ fits the Kantian notion of a transcendental condition for possibility, implying that thoughts are subject to a type of necessity (logical necessity in the terms outlined above) that does not apply to things, which are in this sense merely contingent. As such, when Coleridge states that the imagination is affected by thoughts rather than things, this ought not be read as the denial of any material element to the imagination, but instead as an endorsement of a transcendental analysis ahead of a physiological one. The argument would be that the salient laws governing acts of the poetic imagination are the ideal ones outlined by transcendental philosophy rather than the contingent realities of sensory impression described by empirical psychology.

When formally introducing thoughts and things in *Biographia*, Coleridge outlines the distinction in the following terms: ‘In the former [things]..., the cause appear[s] wholly external, while in the latter [thought]...sometimes our will interfere[s] as the producing or determining cause, and sometimes our nature seemed to act by a mechanism of its own, without any conscious effort of the will, or even against it’.³¹ This leads to a distinction between the passive, voluntary and spontaneous classes of inward experience. Of these three, spontaneous experiences are identified as the most contested, the implication being that passive experiences are adequately explained by external causes and voluntary ones by the exercise of will. In the paragraphs that follow, Coleridge surveys and dismisses the efforts of various thinkers to explain this spontaneity by making it fit to an ‘exclusively material and mechanical’³² system. Although in *Biographia* the critique is focused on this materialist attempt to render spontaneity entirely answerable to a thing-oriented analysis, there

³⁰ CN II, 2785.

³¹ BL I, p.90.

³² Ibid., p.93.

is evidence elsewhere that Coleridge found contrary efforts to co-opt spontaneity as a mysterious species of freely willed action equally unsatisfactory. A marginal note on Friedrich Jacobi's *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, provides a clear example of this: 'the Consciousness of *Spontaneity* is no more what we mean by the Free Will, than the Knowledge of the principle of Irritability. Spontaneity in and of itself differs only from Compulsion, as Necessity *ab intra* [from within] from an equal Necessity *ab extra* [from without]'.³³ This is a clear acknowledgement that spontaneity is subject to a particular type of necessity, which while it might be analogous to the externalised necessity that governs compulsion is nonetheless importantly different. This notion of necessity *ab intra* might seem at first like an arbitrary effort to distinguish casual interactions taking place within the human body from those impinging on its external surfaces, but it is much more fruitfully understood as a type of transcendental relation that stems from an inherent constitution rather than an external influence. In the terms of the previous notebook entry, necessity *ab intra* would apply to necessary possibilities, and thus to thoughts, rather than the contingent realities that apply to the necessity *ab extra* of things. In the case of the mind, this type of necessity would be that which holds between immanent conscious experiences and their transcendental structures.

Whilst Coleridge's use of the things-thoughts distinction clearly serves some form of demarcation in the face of radical materialist reductions, his ultimate goal in offering a transcendental account of the imagination is one of unification. This comes through in another notebook entry which further demonstrates how Coleridge's understanding of thoughts and things constantly seeks to integrate the two rather than separate them:

Res = thing: *res in præsenti* = thinking, i.e. *thinging* or thing out of me = a thing in me — it is a thing-thing — *reata*, *res preterita*, a thought — a thing representative of what was but is not present — Thought is the participle past of Thing — a thing acts on me but not as purely passive, which is the case of all *affection*, *affectus*, but *res agit in co-agitum* — in the first, I am *thinged*, in the latter I thing or think³⁴

Despite being densely frenetic, even by Coleridgean standards, the salient point of this entry is still just about visible: thoughts and things are subject to some form of interaction. The attempt to turn 'thing' from a noun into a verb — 'thinging' — indicates that cognition operates in a dynamic

³³ *Marginalia* III, p.81.

³⁴ *CN* III, 3587.

relation with its object, bringing the thing into conscious apprehension and preserving it in thought. Rather than trying to draw a metaphysically dubious *cordon sanitaire* between mind and world, Coleridge uses the language of thoughts and things to instead promote the view, as Ewan James Jones has observed, ‘that thinking and embodiment are reciprocal’.³⁵ This reiterates another equally important point that both notebook entries make (the former through its analogy with respiration and the latter through its creative grammatical speculations): that the oscillation between thoughts and things as two modes of interpretation is just as important as either one individually. This descriptive fluidity holds the promise of a holistic understanding of human being, one which is threatened by the associationist desire to structurally assimilate thoughts into things without any allowance of the converse. This assimilation is to be achieved through the universal application of the ‘law of association as established in the contemporaneity of the original impression’,³⁶ which states that the only way for ideas to become related is for two sensory impressions to occur together frequently enough they will become linked together through chains of vibrations in the brain and nerves. In Hartley’s own formulation: ‘[s]ince therefore Sensations are conveyed to the Mind, by the Efficiency of corporeal Causes upon the medullary Substance, ... it seems to me, that the Powers of generating Ideas, and raising them by Association, must also arise from corporeal Causes’.³⁷ In attempting to explain the generation of ideas purely by reference to physical causes, the only relevant factor becomes their spatio-temporal coincidence as physiological events. This radically materialist interpretation explains how thoughts that vary drastically in their content can eventually become connected to recall one another, but it also offers no way of strongly distinguishing such idiosyncratic associations from the normal course of thought, implying that the difference between chaotic and ordered thought is one of degree rather than kind.

The inability of psychologistic approaches to differentiate arbitrarily associated ideas from meaningfully connected ones forms a prominent part of the critiques in Coleridge and Husserl. To take the law of contemporaneity identified with Hartleyan associationism, the problem with such a law is not that it is wrong, but that it is hopelessly general. This is a point that Coleridge had already made several years prior to *Biographia* in his *Principles of Genial Criticism*, where he declared that ‘[a]ssociation in philosophy is like the term stimulus in medicine; explaining every thing, it explains

³⁵ Jones, *Coleridge and the Philosophy of Poetic Form*, p.17.

³⁶ *BL I*, p.91.

³⁷ *Observations*, p.72.

nothing; and above all, leaves itself unexplained'.³⁸ Whilst no one would deny that thoughts occur in temporal succession, identifying this contemporaneity as the sole determinant of mental relations is another claim altogether. Coleridge makes this point in his marginalia on Johann Maass, stating that '[c]ontemporeity seems to me the common condition under which all the determining Powers act rather than itself the effective law'.³⁹ More generally, Husserl argues that 'psychological laws' are... only 'empirical laws'[.] approximate generalities of coexistence and succession relating to matters of fact which may in one case be thus, in another case otherwise⁴⁰ - in Coleridge's language they describe only 'contingent Realities'. Connections between thoughts are obviously going to occur successively in time, but instead of treating this relation as a bare minimum, associationism tries to present it as sufficient grounds for explaining all mental processes. This outlook, as Klaus Held observes, 'replaces the question about the right kind of thinking with what is essentially a scientific, empirical description of thought processes'⁴¹, jeopardising the possibility of analysing imaginative or logical modes of thought in relation to standards of value and success. Husserl sees this as a particularly acute problem for modes of thought that are supposed to bear a relation to truth and falsity, as 'the identification of logical with psychological laws would ... destroy every difference between correct and incorrect thinking, since the incorrect modes of judgement are no less governed by psychological laws than the correct ones'.⁴² Further casualties of this reductive outlook would include 'a rich imagination, a comprehensive memory, a capacity for close attention etc... [all of which] have intellectual meaning only in the case of a *thinking* being, whose validation and invention falls under laws and forms'.⁴³ It is this mission of recapturing the intellectual meaning of mental acts, rather than simply treating them as contingent chains of physical causality, that is at the heart of Coleridge's distinction.

The reduction of thoughts to materially governed things makes it impossible for associationism to apply any law to their relations other than contemporaneity. It is on this point that Coleridge grounds one of the most substantive parts of his criticism, arguing that, if Hartley's system is accepted, 'we must bewilder ourselves whenever we would pierce the *adyta* of causation'.⁴⁴ The

³⁸ *SW&F* I, pp.359-60.

³⁹ *Marginalia* III, p.792.

⁴⁰ *Logical Investigations*, p.163.

⁴¹ Klaus Held, 'Husserl's Phenomenological Method' in *The New Husserl*, ed. Don Welton (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2003), p.11.

⁴² *Logical Investigations*, p.130.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.66.

⁴⁴ *BL* I, p.107.

term ‘adyta’ comes from the Greek for ‘innermost sanctuary’, or more literally ‘not to be entered’, the implication being that if contemporaneity really is the only law of mental activity associations become brute facts for which no deeper rationale can be established. This is expanded upon with an argument taken from the German psychologist Johann Maass, stating that when mental activity is viewed solely from the perspective of external causation it is impossible to explain why associations even form in the first place. If each idea manifests as a specific vibration in the brain, and associations arise as the result of chains of vibrations occurring successively, this by itself gives no *a priori* reason why one idea-vibration should give rise to another. The only answer available to the associationist is the law of contemporaneity, which simply states that repeated succession in time will create a ‘disposition’ for one idea-vibration to produce another. The problem with this response is that to say that causes become ‘disposed’ is merely to restate the fact that the ideas have become connected, without any elaboration on why this is the case. This is where Coleridge's argument takes its first markedly phenomenological turn, claiming that if this were the only law that governed mental activity ‘it would indeed be mere lawlessness’.⁴⁵ Using the example of the view from atop St. Paul’s cathedral, he points out that due to the vast number of impressions occurring simultaneously and the almost infinite number of possible vibration chains, the radical contingency entailed by the law of contemporaneity would turn any perception of this complexity into ‘absolute *delirium*’.⁴⁶ The implicit point of this example is that if one views the perception as a thing, a mere product of external stimulation, it quickly becomes subsumed under an almost unfathomable level of empirical contingency, whereas if one views it as a thought, subject to its own internal laws, this needn’t be the case. On this view, the mind can be seen as regulating and directing its attention in order to keep the manifold of impressions under control, thematising and shaping the vast swathe of impressions into the complex, but still comprehensible, perception of a bustling cityscape. These points bring the subjective experience, with its immanently unified character, back into the philosophical fold, using it to question the sufficiency of the mechanical account offered by associationism. What is decisive about this appeal to the nature of experience is that presents a robust order and structure as an evident truth of how the mind operates, one which contests the contingently aggregated mental landscape that is entailed by associationism.

⁴⁵ BL I., p.111.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

iii - The despotism of the eye

Whilst Coleridge devotes plenty of attention to the shortcomings of associationism's mechanistic outlook, in order to fully appreciate the scope of his criticisms it is important to consider these in relation to the epistemology that underlies them. This is most clearly expressed at the start of chapter six, with one of *Biographia*'s most memorable philosophical statements:

Under that despotism of the eye... we are restless because invisible things are not the objects of vision; and metaphysical systems for the most, become popular, not for their truth, but in proportion as they attribute to causes a susceptibility of being *seen*, if only our visual organs were sufficiently powerful.⁴⁷

The central point here is that pure empiricism is unable to countenance any notion of relation which is not wholly grounded in the evidence of the senses, primarily vision, and thus ascribes no laws other than what can be positively affirmed in this manner. This strict derivation of all knowledge from experience motivates the inordinate explanatory weighting given to things at the expense of thoughts, stipulating a casual relation between sensory stimulation and epistemic justification. This is predicated upon a very particular understanding of 'experience', one which inevitably depersonalises it by insisting that the relevant feature of any subjective idea is its origin in some objective impression made on the senses. There are of course empiricist positions, most notably Hume's, that would reject this distinction between objective and subjective and instead understand the difference purely in terms of degrees of phenomenal intensity,⁴⁸ but all this does is recast the same dynamic by designating sensory phenomena as *ur-experiences* that all others must align with in order to be validated. The description of this outlook as a 'despotism' — a system founded on an arbitrary and disproportionate conferral of legitimacy — makes it clear that Coleridge rejects this equation of sensation and epistemic justification. His resistance to empiricism ought not to be thought of as a hostility towards experience *per se*, but rather the specific understanding of sensation as the origin of all knowledge.

The tendency for empirical psychology to overemphasise the role played by external causes is not lost on Husserl, who sees it as a major problem in the accounts of mental abstraction found in

⁴⁷ *BL* I, p.107.

⁴⁸ David Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter Millican (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp.12-3.

Locke and Berkeley. Husserl highlights this when he argues that ‘in their phenomenological analysis, they [Locke and Berkeley] stick almost exclusively to the intuitive individual, to the palpable side, as it were, of our thought experiences’.⁴⁹ This bias ultimately holds back both accounts of abstraction by insisting that it must be anchored in empirical particulars. Locke’s theory states that any abstract idea must be drawn from the particular ideas which present themselves in experience.⁵⁰ Berkeley takes this argument even further, claiming that since it is impossible to bring a truly abstract idea before the senses there can be no abstract ideas.⁵¹ The mistake of these theories, according to Husserl, is that they assume the meaning of the experience is sufficiently determined by its accompanying impression, rather than operating within in a wider context of mental activity.⁵² He thus conversely claims that ‘one and the same sensuous intuition can on occasion serve as the basis for [multiple]... modes of conceiving’⁵³, meaning that the impression in fact underdetermines the experience and requires some supplementary act of apprehension on the part of the subject. Taking Locke’s example of a triangle⁵⁴, Husserl argues that the same visual impression could manifest phenomenologically either as an experience of the particular — this triangle here and now — or of the abstract — triangles *per se* as a class of geometric shape. In the latter case, he claims that ‘Locke should... have reminded himself that a triangle is something which has triangularity’.⁵⁵ He offers a similar response to Berkeley, who ‘speaks as if geometrical proofs were conducted for the triangle drawn in the ink on the paper, or in the chalk on the chalkboard’.⁵⁶ To someone untrained in geometry, it could well be that the visual experience of a triangle manifests as a few lines of chalk, but to a mathematician these might instead register as useful stand-ins for a non-sensory abstract. Coleridge makes the same observation in a marginal note on Maass, noting that ‘[t]he *mark* itself is always individual... by an act of understanding it may be rendered a Sign or general term’.⁵⁷ The point is to demonstrate how the empirical components of an experience neither

⁴⁹ *Logical Investigations*, p.399.

⁵⁰ John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1982), Book I, Chapter II.

⁵¹ George Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge and Three Dialogues*, ed. Roger Woolhouse (Penguin: London, 1988), pp.44-6.

⁵² Elinor Shaffer observes how a similar conviction, namely that when it comes to perception that ‘[i]nterpretation is embedded in event’ (*Kubla Khan and the Fall of Jerusalem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p.46), acts as a spur for Coleridge’s thinking about the relationship between sight, judgement and revelation in the context of Christian doctrine on miracles.

⁵³ *Logical Investigations*, p.357.

⁵⁴ *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book IV, Chapter VII.

⁵⁵ *Logical Investigations*, p.359.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p.378.

⁵⁷ *Marginalia* III, p.791.

exhaustively account for its content nor strictly determine its mode of apprehension. Abstract, non-sensory qualities like triangularity are precisely the kind of ‘invisible thing’ that Coleridge refers to. The fact that Husserl’s examples are geometric also chimes with Coleridge’s parenthetical remark that the emancipation from the eye’s despotism begins with ‘geometric discipline’ in the form of Pythagorean and Platonic thought.⁵⁸ In the case of associationism, Coleridge’s point is that the ideal laws of thought, just like the abstract laws of mathematics and geometry, are not amenable to being *seen* in any straightforward, empirical sense, but this only highlights how an exclusively empirical philosophy is a poor means by which to discover them. This much is evident in his fondness for the Leibnizian *credo nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu, præter ipsum intellectum* - there is nothing in the mind that was not before in the senses, except the mind itself. The final clause of this statement is clearly the salient one: the mind itself is presupposed in the senses. As has already been outlined in the discussion of thoughts and things, ‘the mind itself’ in this context does not denote some free-floating Cartesian soul-substance separate from physical reality, but the totality of transcendental laws that govern the operations of consciousness. Understood phenomenologically, the point is that any given experience has the potential to be analysed in terms of its essential features, which requires a radically different epistemology to that offered by empiricism.

Another significant indication of Coleridge’s resistance to the despotism of the eye comes in a lengthy footnote discussing the various senses of the word ‘idea’. The footnote begins by clarifying that, for the purposes of presenting the position of his empiricist opponents, the word is used ‘in Mr. Hume’s sense’⁵⁹ as a catch-all term for the content of reflective thought as opposed to the content of immediate sensation, which Hume designates by the opposing term ‘impressions’.⁶⁰ This sense of ‘idea’ is inherited from Locke, who uses it in an even broader sense to mean any object of immediate consciousness, sensory or otherwise. Coleridge makes it apparent that his use of the term in this sense is a begrudging one, since he feels that ‘the vague use of the term has been the cause of much error and confusion’.⁶¹ This sentiment is echoed by Husserl, who claims that ‘the basic defect of Locke’s theory of knowledge, and of the English theory of knowledge in general, [is] its unclear concept of ‘idea’’.⁶² By using a single term to cover the whole expanse of subjective experiences,

⁵⁸ *BL I*, p.107.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.96n*.

⁶⁰ *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, pp.12-13.

⁶¹ *BL I*, p.97n*. See also *CN III*, 3268: ‘that abominable word, Idea/ how have I been struggling to get rid of it, & to find some exact word for each each exact meaning’.

⁶² *Logical Investigations*, p.355.

these accounts homogenise a vast array of different mental phenomena. Coleridge contrasts this empiricist use of idea to that found in Plato, who ‘adopted it as a technical term, and as the antithesis to ‘eidola’, or sensuous images... the ideas themselves he considered as mysterious powers, living, seminal, formative, and exempt from time’.⁶³ On this understanding, what empiricists call ideas are actually eidola, mere images that are conditioned by a deeper series of laws. The equivalent Platonic term for these laws would be *eidos*, a term often translated as ‘essence’ and one of which Husserl makes ample use, describing his phenomenology in the aptly named *Ideas* as an eidetic science i.e. a science of essences. Coleridge expounds this Platonic connection between ideas and laws in an 1801 letter to Josiah Wedgwood: ‘By *Ideas* Plato, notwithstanding his fantastic expressions respecting them, meant what Locke calls the original Faculties & Tendencies of the mind, the internal Organs, as it were, and *Laws* of human thinking’⁶⁴, and again later in a marginal note on a manuscript copy of *The Friend*: ‘the Terms, Idea and Law, are always & necessarily <either> Correlatives or <identical>’.⁶⁵ Confining the notion of idea to that of a sensuous image as the product of external causation undermines any claim that the mind might possess an inherent determinative power. This in turn leads to the conclusion that the only law that can be said to apply to thought comes from an external force rather than the ideas themselves. By highlighting this distinction between empirical and Platonic ideas, Coleridge reopens a difference between the sensory and ideal that empiricism is premised upon collapsing, allowing for a law to be posited which is rooted in ideal rather than real necessity.

iv - Active and Passive Synthesis: the water insect

Whilst he makes it clear that the associationist law of contemporaneity is compromised as long as it is wedded to a reductive empirical materialism, Coleridge concludes his discussion by indicating how it might become integrated into a more nuanced model of mental activity. As has already been noted, he clearly doesn't deny the general view posited by the law of contemporaneity - that ideas become habitually connected by following on from one another sequentially. The problem arises from ‘mistaking the *conditions* of a thing for its *causes* and *essence*’⁶⁶, assuming that this sequential chain of thoughts is a terminus of explanation rather than a foundation. This first emerges when Coleridge, again following Maass, identifies Aristotle as the most significant forerunner to

⁶³ *BL* I, p.97n*.

⁶⁴ *CL* II, p.682.

⁶⁵ *Friend* I, p.459n².

⁶⁶ *BL* I, p.123.

associationist psychology. Whereas thinkers like Hartley create methodological problems by focusing on a precise material process for association, Aristotle's formulations offer the blueprint for theory of mind that can accommodate association without succumbing to the pitfalls of reductive materialism. Unlike Hartley, Aristotle's description of thought processes 'carefully distinguishes them from material motion'.⁶⁷ Since Aristotle's account ascribes no explanatory prominence to spatio-temporal causality, a variety of possible associative relations can be posited that are based on the content of the thoughts involved, including interdependence, likeness and contrast. The specific Greek word used by Aristotle to describe these workings of the mind is 'kineseis', which can be generally translated as 'movements'.⁶⁸ These 'movements' are not motions in space, since Aristotle 'excludes place and motion from all the operations of thought'⁶⁹, but just the basic observation that thoughts beget other thoughts. What this Aristotelian proto-psychology offers, according to Coleridge, is a 'universal law of the *passive* fancy and *mechanical* memory'.⁷⁰ This helps to highlight the fact that Coleridge is by no means afraid to concede an element of passivity to the mind's operations, and that he is willing to admit some degree of mechanism to its operations. The salient problem with the Hartleyan account is not its ascription of passivity, but rather the attempt to extend this to all areas of consciousness on the basis of a commitment to materialist metaphysics and empiricist epistemology. Indeed, when Hartley writes that '[w]hen Ideas, and Trains of Ideas, occur, or are called up, in a vivid manner, and without regard to the Order of former actual Impressions and Perceptions, this is said to be done by the Power of *Imagination* or *Fancy*'⁷¹ one would only need to remove the word imagination to get something very close to Coleridge's account of the fancy as 'a mode of memory emancipated from the order of space and time'.⁷² It is clear that even long after abandoning his commitment to associationism, Coleridge continued to find a use for some of its conceptual apparatus. Indeed, the overall treatment of Hartley in *Biographia* is much more of a reconfiguration than it is a rejection, returning its insights into the passive elements of cognition back to their more fruitful Aristotelian roots where they can function as part of a broader account of how the activity and passivity interact in the constitution of conscious experience.

⁶⁷ BL I, p.102.

⁶⁸ Cf. Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. Hugh Lawson-Tancred (London: Penguin 1986). Glossary (p.121) gives an overview of *kinesis* and section 1.3 (p.139) also touches on it, 1.2 (p.135) surveys Democritus' view, which is probably the closest analogue to the materialism Coleridge is dealing with.

⁶⁹ BL I, p.102

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.104.

⁷¹ *Observations*, p.3.

⁷² BL I, p.304.

Following on from the endorsement of Aristotle's more general conception of contemporaneity, Coleridge begins to outline his own conception of the notion. He begins by arguing that 'contemporaneity... is the *limit* and *condition* of the laws of the mind, being itself a law of matter, at least of phænomena considered material'.⁷³ Coleridge is willing to concede that cognition is bound by the conditions that govern material physiology, but this is not mutually exclusive with other laws also applying. He even goes on to argue that the material condition of gravity offers a useful way of framing the issue of mental activity. Whilst all material bodies are subject to gravity, this does not mean that gravity cannot be counteracted in actions like leaping. Just as one can admit the ubiquity of gravity without conceding its totality, Coleridge argues that the same can be said of contemporaneity when it comes to the mind. His argument then takes another overtly phenomenological turn when he invites 'a man [to] watch his mind in the process of composing; or... while he is trying to recollect a name'.⁷⁴ These examples both offer instances of when the subject elects to search for something particular from out of the ongoing stream of thought, actively seizing on the desideratum once it is produced by the passive process. The notion of the mind inserting bursts of directed activity within a wider context of automatic contemporaneity is encapsulated by Coleridge's analogy of a water-insect, which '*wins* its way up against the stream, by alternate pulses of active and passive motion'.⁷⁵ It is not that the water-insect manifests its activity by transcending the flow of the water, but rather that it injects its own counter-movement within this flow. It can also allow the stream to carry it back so as to generate a 'fulcrum'⁷⁶ against which further counter-movement might be manifested, just as the person trying to remember a name might let their memory generate a collection of passively associated names in an effort to pick out the right one. This is an image which he claims offers 'no unapt emblem of the mind's self-experience in the act of thinking'⁷⁷, restating his commitment to phenomenological accuracy.

In order to demonstrate the phenomenological significance of Coleridge's reformulated version of the associative law of contemporaneity, it is worth comparing it to Husserl's own analysis of association offered in a series of lectures entitled *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active*

⁷³ *BL* I, p.123.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.124.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* A more sceptical philosophical reading of this passage is offered by Craig, who reads it as a 'repressed acknowledgement' (p.45) of the associative model of the imagination proposed by David Hume.

⁷⁶ *BL* I, p.124.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Synthesis. Subtitled as ‘lectures on transcendental logic’ and given multiple times throughout the 1920s, these analyses are far more noticeably phenomenological than those of the earlier *Logical Investigations*. Here, rather than defending ideal logical laws against psychologistic reductions, Husserl instead focuses on the primordial activities of consciousness that make logical thought possible to begin with. As Anthony Steinbock observes, this task ‘entails, in part, tracing the accomplishments of thinking to their genetic origins in *passive*, pre-cognitive syntheses’⁷⁸; the analysis of association represents the most basic of these accomplishments and in large part builds on Husserl’s highly influential work on time-consciousness.⁷⁹ An essential part of experiencing the world temporally involves the retention of past experiences, objects do not simply pop in and out of consciousness in a binary fashion, but instead gradually dwindle from consciousness as they get further and further from what is presently experienced until eventually they are lost completely. Associations are therefore particularly interesting for Husserl on account of the fact that they represent an instance of the mind forging a connection, what he refers to as a ‘bridging term’⁸⁰, between a moment of present lived experience and another experience that has passed beyond the horizon of immediate consciousness. This process is described as an ‘awakening’⁸¹, since it involves the reactivation of an experience that has previously been rendered dormant by the ongoing replenishment of the temporal stream. For Husserl this prompts the question: ‘[w]hat brings about the concatenation, the process of joining together? How do concatenations (as opposed to mere collections) come about in mere passivity, as opposed to mere collections in which everything forms a bond with everything else... in a disordered manner?’⁸² It is quite clear that associative processes do not simply mechanically reproduce the same connections formed in the ongoing flow of time-consciousness, but instead pick out highly specific elements from the vast sedimentation of experiences that have passed from view. According to Held, ‘[t]hrough reflection we see that association is not a blind mechanism, because I can recreate and understand through which connecting point(s) a pairing originally arose in consciousness’.⁸³

⁷⁸ Edmund Husserl, *Analyses concerning passive and active syntheses*, trans. Anthony J. Steinbock (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), p.xxii. Hereafter *Analyses*.

⁷⁹ Cf. Edmund Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, ed. Martin Heidegger, trans. James Churchill (Martinus Nijhoff: The Hague, 1964).

⁸⁰ *Analyses*, p.168.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.163.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.181.

⁸³ Held, ‘Husserl’s Phenomenological Method’, p.43.

The promise of a phenomenology of passive synthesis is to show how associations are formed on the basis of meaningful connections between experiences, rather than just the order in which they appear. Husserl states that any objects given in the same immanent experience are naturally going to be subject to the most general synthesis of co-existence and succession, but this does not mean that they are therefore associated in any strong sense. In order for this to occur, the objects must become connected through some additional relation, meaning that '[w]hat is essential is not succession, but rather a nexus that is akin to its own order'.⁸⁴ A key term here for Husserl is 'resonance', which denotes the quality of a given object that causes it to become awakened in association. For example, if looking at a red house prompts the remembrance of a red apple, the resonance would inhere in the quality of redness. It is the identification of this resonant element which gives direction to the association, acting as the criterion by which previous experiences can be recalled and forming a 'synthesis by means of similarity'.⁸⁵ The same essential observation can be found in Coleridge's *Marginalia* on Maass, wherein he notes that 'in many cases... Association is merely an Act of Recognition... which Hartley seems never to have remembered'.⁸⁶ This is expanded in *Biographia*'s seventh chapter, where Coleridge argues that there is more to association than just mechanically reconstructed contemporaneity:

Seeing a mackerel it may happen, that I immediately think of gooseberries, because I at the same time ate mackerel with gooseberries as the sauce. The first syllable of the latter word, being that which had co-existed with the image of the bird so-called, I may then think of a goose. In the next moment the image of a swan may arise before me, though I had never seen the two birds together.⁸⁷

What these examples demonstrate in Husserlian terms is that the range of possible 'bridging terms' available to the passive consciousness extends far beyond contemporaneity, and is responsive to resonances created by relations such as 'the joint operation of likeness and contrast... *cause* and *effect*... [and] *order*'.⁸⁸ On this basis, Coleridge offers his own law of association: 'that whatever makes certain parts of a total impression more vivid or distinct than the rest, will determine the mind to recall these in preference to others equally linked by the common condition of

⁸⁴ *Analyses*, p.188.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.168.

⁸⁶ *Marginalia* III, p.792.

⁸⁷ *BL* I, p.125.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

contemporaneity.’⁸⁹ The significance of this reformulation is twofold: firstly, it presents association not as a random by-product of material causality, but as a rudimentary form of meaningful synthesis, what Held calls ‘sense formation’⁹⁰; secondly, and importantly for the current analysis, it does this by purposefully abstracting away from explanations rooted in physical causes, opting instead to pursue an interpretation based on an ‘appeal to our own consciousness’.⁹¹

Returning to the image of the water insect, the reformulated law of association shows how, even when the mind allows itself to be passively carried along by the flow of the world’s inputs, it is still responsive to its own internal laws rather than surrendering itself totally to material causes. The other side of this coin is, of course, the active element which conversely operates by pushing against this flow. This potential for active synthesis is acknowledged by Coleridge when he states that ‘the will itself by confining and intensifying the attention may arbitrarily give vividness or distinctness to any object whatsoever’.⁹² At the root of both forms of synthesis, and facilitating the interaction between the two is the faculty of the imagination, ‘which is at once both active and passive’.⁹³ Whilst the poetic imagination is firmly situated in the active element, being ‘joined to a superior voluntary controul’⁹⁴, on a more general level it is evident that the imagination in a philosophical sense shares the same formal features identified in the law of association, most notably that it is a directed, synthetic process of sense formation that adheres to ideal rather than material laws. In this sense, the reformulated law of association offers a phenomenological blueprint for how to understand the imagination more generally, meaning that its definition begins long before the notoriously dense theses in chapter twelve, and indeed before transcendental philosophy has even been mentioned. By reincorporating the law of association into a more philosophically sophisticated context of ideal laws, as well as offering a concrete instance of a philosophical critique based on a reflective analysis of consciousness, Coleridge lays an important part of the foundation for the account of the imagination. In this respect, Coleridge’s response to the empirical psychology of his native philosophical tradition is far more than an attempt to vocally distance himself from the embarrassment of his youthful beliefs. On the contrary, what his critique shows more than anything

⁸⁹ *BL I*, p.127. Compare this to Husserl: ‘The resonating element awakens its entire nexus of its co-existence and succession according to the measure of its immediacy and mediacy. The awakened element necessarily awakens its surroundings and what is or was awakened in them gets privileged’ (*Analyses*, p.508).

⁹⁰ Held, ‘Husserl’s Phenomenological Method’, p.43.

⁹¹ *BL I*, p.125.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.127.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.124.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.125.

is a desire to extract what is correct in associationist thinking while simultaneously stating in no uncertain terms the shortcomings that cause it to become untenable.

II - Coleridge's phenomenological engagements with idealism

i - Idealism as a philosophical foil

In the chapters following the critique of Hartley, Coleridge continues to prepare the ground for his account of the imagination through a highly narrativised account of his own intellectual development, framing it as an exacting search for a truly systematic philosophy. Among the list of names populating this account, three in particular stand out as significant catalysts: Kant, Fichte and Schelling, the leading figures of the Critical philosophy. The biographical veracity of these chapters has been shown to be questionable at best¹, but their philosophical function as part of Coleridge's ongoing argument is also worth examining. Whilst the polemical quality of chapters five to seven attempts to dissuade the reader from an account of the imagination grounded in materialist empiricism, the more positive presentation of these German influences forms a rhetorical counterbalance to this, offering a precedent for the style of argument Coleridge wants to construct in its place. If Coleridge's attack on associationism is driven by a search for ideal laws over contingent causal patterns, the various systems of Critical philosophy each go some way to addressing this problem by placing philosophy upon rigorous, systematic foundations rooted in a transcendental analysis of the mind's activity. The overall impression one gets from Coleridge's neat summary is that these thinkers form a more or less unbroken line of progression and development, with each offering new insights to supplement and improve upon their predecessor. What this presentation elides, however, is the complex and ambivalent relationship that Coleridge had towards all of these systems, which in turn obscures the fact that his own position develops just as much through opposition as through agreement. Unlike associationism, which he makes an overt show of setting up and knocking down, these engagements require one to look further afield than just *Biographia*. It is Coleridge's marginal annotations on major systematic works, as well as remarks made in other contexts such as his letters or notebooks, that give a sense of what Coleridge focused on in his reading, as well as the questions and problems he most sought to engage with.

¹ Cf. Norman Fruman *Coleridge: The Damaged Archangel* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971) for the most extensive elaboration of this point. This account offers multiple robust reminders of Coleridge's capacity for duplicity, which ought not to be overlooked. That being said, Fruman's relentlessly suspicious psychologising, which only just falls short of declaring Coleridge intellectually bankrupt, obscures a considerable amount of nuance in his engagement with his sources. A helpful counterbalance to this reading, which contextualises Coleridge's actions within a less pathological framework of Anglo-Continental political tensions, can be found in Monika Class's *Coleridge and Kantian Ideas in England* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).

An important aim in this chapter will be to argue that the differences between Coleridge and his German sources are just as informative as the commonalities. As such, it will avoid the more concessionary route taken by Gian Orsini, who considers Coleridge an eloquent mediator of other thinkers' complicated ideas.² This is largely informed by his view that 'Coleridge is primarily a poet'³, an assumption which implicitly relegates his philosophical interests to the level of an enthusiastic dilettantism. Appearing in 1969, Orsini's study predates the publication of a great deal of Coleridgean material, including the collected marginalia which will be relied upon here, a fact that he openly acknowledges when he declares that his work ought to be taken 'in the nature of an interim report'.⁴ Once these materials are taken into account, it becomes considerably more difficult to conclude that Coleridge sought merely to mediate and disseminate German ideas rather than critically engage with them on the basis of his own philosophical project. A more critical variant of Orsini's assumptions also informs the approach taken by René Wellek, who admonishes Coleridge's philosophy as 'heterogenous, incoherent and even contradictory' to the point where studying it is declared 'ultimately ...futile'.⁵ The primary limitation of Wellek's otherwise very well-informed critique is that it assesses Coleridge's engagement with Kant from a predominantly Kantian perspective, which leads him to interpret similarities as debts and differences as shortcomings. More specifically, Wellek seems unable to view Coleridge's attempt to move beyond the strict limits of Kant's epistemology as anything more than a yearning to return to pre-critical Christian metaphysics.⁶ Whilst there is undeniably some truth to this assessment as far as Coleridge's theology goes, it ignores the fact that Coleridge evidently had other reservations about the viability of Kant's representationalist conception of consciousness that were independent of his faith. Accordingly, this chapter will aim to demonstrate how Coleridge's engagement illustrates a consistent phenomenological concern about formulating an adequate conception of consciousness, one which distinguishes him from his German contemporaries.

Rather than offer a comprehensive overview of Coleridge's relation to Kant, Fichte or Schelling, the following comparisons will focus on a specific theme that is particularly salient to the development

² Gian Orsini, *Coleridge and German Idealism* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969).

³ *Ibid.*, p.viii.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.v. The occasional use that Orsini does make of marginalia is predominantly second hand, relying on works such as Willem Schrickx "Coleridge's Marginalia in Kant's *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft*" in *Studia Germanica I* (1959) 161-187. Muirhead, by comparison, demonstrates a much better awareness of the critical marginalia, and thus presents a notably more sympathetic picture of Coleridge's philosophical acumen.

⁵ René Wellek, *Kant in England 1793-1838* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1939), p.67. Orsini cites Wellek as the primary foundation for his own approach (p.v).

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.108.

of the argument of *Biographia*: the accounts of the subject-object relationship. The aim will be to demonstrate Coleridge's reservations with how all three thinkers conceptualise this relationship culminating in a position which shares a great deal with Husserl's account of intentionality.⁷ In the case of Kant, the division of the world into phenomena and noumena obfuscates how the mind accesses the world beyond it. This does not so much solve the problem as redefine it as one of how the acts of the mind condition what is given in merely phenomenal experience. Whilst from Kant's perspective this acts as an effective form of epistemological restraint, which ultimately justifies the mind's application of its innate categories, for Coleridge it unacceptably alienates the subject from the world and limits any sense of justification to an internalised set of arbitrary relations. The desire to move beyond the phenomena/noumena distinction is by no means unique to Coleridge, and is a defining feature of the post-Kantian systems of Fichte and Schelling. Whilst Coleridge finds common cause in these philosophers' efforts to move beyond Kant's strict limitations, when it comes to their respective alternatives he expresses significant reservations about both. In the case of Fichte, Coleridge is supportive of the effort to close the gap between theoretical and practical philosophy by grounding the system in an act rather than a representation. The problem comes with Fichte's efforts to encapsulate Kant's thing-in-itself within an absolute, all-encompassing subjectivity, which Coleridge rejects for its disconnect with experiences of limitation and transcendence. Of all the post-Kantians, Coleridge finds Schelling's philosophy to be the most promising in terms of building on Kant, as it is premised on reintroducing a robust conception of objective nature back into the dialectic through the notion of *naturphilosophie*. However, whereas Fichte was guilty of overemphasising the role of the mind in the mind-world dynamic, Schelling's system risks not differentiating strongly enough between the two in its attempts to accommodate this binary within an absolute identity. The path that Coleridge attempts to forge between these various philosophical positions is one that, like Kant, retains a robust notion of a mind-independent world; like Fichte, gives the mind an active role in engaging with the world; and, like Schelling, aims not to give undue priority to either the subject or object in accounting for this interaction.⁸

⁷ This argument is related to McFarland's presentation of Coleridge's thought as a response to the ontological binary of the 'I am' and 'it is'. Whilst McFarland gets considerable analytical mileage out of this distinction, the rigidity of this binary is misrepresentative of how Coleridge conceived of his own thought. For a further critique of the limitations of McFarland's schema cf. Berkeley, *Coleridge and the Crisis of Reason*.

⁸ Perkins gives a similar sketch of Coleridge's response to idealism when she notes that 'philosophy seemed to him to have become impoverished... by assertions of the unknowability of the noumenal (Kant), or, again, by an abstract idealism which was unable to maintain a proper balance between the reality of the objective 'outer' and the subjective 'inner worlds', between 'it is' and 'I am' (Fichte and Schelling)' (p.20).

ii - Kant

For all that his own thought sought to move beyond him, it is clear that Coleridge held Kant in a higher regard than almost any other philosopher. In a letter to J.H. Green, he declares that ‘I reverence Immanuel Kant with my whole heart and soul; and believe him to be the only philosopher, for *all men* who have the power of thinking’⁹, and advised James Gooden that ‘In him [Kant] is contained all that can be *learnt*’.¹⁰ These praises are illustrative in the emphasis placed on Kant’s pedagogical efficacy rather than the truth of his philosophical system, which is echoed in a marginal note to K.W.F. Solgar which states that ‘Kant had <1st> to overthrow, 2nd to build a the best possible temporary shed and Tool-House, both for those ejected from the old Edifice, & for the erection of a new Edifice’.¹¹ Coleridge’s ‘Tool-House’ metaphor makes it clear that he sees Kant as providing a worthy method for philosophy, even if his version of Critical philosophy is presented as a necessary but insufficient step on the path to a complete system. Kant’s major shortcoming in Coleridge’s eyes is his strict epistemic dualism between the phenomenal world of appearances and the noumenal world of things in themselves. This much is indicated in *Biographia* when Coleridge notes that ‘I could never believe, it was possible for him to have meant no more by his *Noumenon* or THING IN ITSELF, than his mere words express’.¹² While it might have secured justification for the application of the mind’s categories with regards to phenomenal appearances, Coleridge’s problem with Kant’s division was that it left no possible way to know whether this application extended any further. Returning to the long note on his copy of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Coleridge pointedly asks ‘[w]hat Test then can I find in the (different) modifications of my Being to verify and substantiate each other? What other distinction between Schein and Erscheinung. Illusion and Appearance more than the old one of - in one I dream to myself, and in the other I dream in common[?]’.¹³ Husserl, while also being a great admirer of Kant, makes a similar critique in the *Logical Investigations*, arguing that ‘if all creatures of a genus are constitutively compelled to judge alike, they are in empirical agreement, but in the ideal sense demanded by supra-empirical logic, there might as well have been disagreement as agreement’.¹⁴ The point in both instances is that intra- and intersubjective agreement alone offer no promise of truth, meaning that whilst

⁹ CL IV, p.791.

¹⁰ CL V, p.14.

¹¹ *Marginalia* V, p.90. The extent to which Coleridge draws on Kant in his later pedagogical primer the *Logic* provides further evidence of this.

¹² BL I p.155.

¹³ *Marginalia* III, p.249.

¹⁴ *Logical investigations*, p.150.

transcendental logic might take two steps forward from the psychological contingency of empiricism, it takes one step back if it ends up unable to address anything beyond human cognition.

In their critiques of the phenomena-noumena distinction, Coleridge and Husserl both advocate a model of cognition that is more concretely related to an external object, rather than a purely internal representation. This is why the issue of intentionality is of such importance for Husserlian phenomenology in general, since the mind's capacity to direct itself towards objects and make sense of what it encounters is only of any interest if these objects are genuine constituents of the world rather than mere mental images. In a striking section of *Ideas*, Husserl boldly proclaims that 'it is... a fundamental error to suppose that perception ... fails to come into contact with the thing itself'.¹⁵ This is followed up by a firm repudiation of any representational medium operating within ordinary perception, arguing that as soon as this is introduced one is simply dealing with a different variety of conscious experience: '[t]he spatial thing which we see is, despite all its transcendence, perceived, we are consciously aware of it as given in *embodied* form. We are not given an image or sign in its place. We must not substitute the consciousness of a sign or an image for a perception'.¹⁶ Once access to the world ceases to be mediated by a veil of phenomenality it can instead be explained through the ways in which perspectival relations manifest in perpetually shifting states of adequacy and inadequacy that continuously allow limited access to objects themselves.¹⁷ This desire to restore perception to non-representational immediacy is also a key concern for Coleridge, who asks in a notebook entry: '[w]hat is the common principle of the philosophical systems of Des Cartes, (Lock?), Berkley [sic], Hume and Kant? That our senses in no way acquaint us with Things as they are in and of themselves'.¹⁸ For all its sophisticated advances, Kant's philosophy still suffers from the same shortcomings as its pre-critical counterparts regarding perception. As the note continues, Coleridge details the specifics of his dissatisfaction with these systems: 'have we or have we not a faculty of Perception? Do we perceive, or do we only deduce the existence of Things?'.¹⁹ Just as Husserl argues that consciousness of a sign is not perception, so Coleridge presents a clear disjunction between direct perception and indirect deduction, implicitly repudiating any attempt to identify one with the other. This makes it clear that perception, as far as Coleridge is concerned, must involve some form of direct acquaintance, a fact which only becomes clearer when he goes on

¹⁵ *Ideas*, p.80.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.81.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.76-8.

¹⁸ *CN III*, 3602.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

to explain that ‘impressions are in the first instance *immediate sensations*: as soon as *attention* is directed upon them, and they are taken up into *consciousness*, they become *Perceptions*’.²⁰ As well as challenging the characterisation of sensations as internalised, subjective events, this also hints at a recognisable presentation of intentionality. This places the emphasis on the way in which the mind directs its attention in order to comprehend the world of objects with which it is faced.

Further implications of Coleridge’s disagreement with the phenomena-noumena distinction can be seen by examining his response to what he dubs ‘the great point, the germ’²¹ of Kant’s system: the transcendental deduction of the categories. The deduction seeks to explain how the mind’s categories interact with the input of the senses in order to create a coherent, unified realm of experience which Kant calls the ‘transcendental unity of apperception’.²² This represents a crucial moment in Kant’s argument, as it is where he attempts to demonstrate that the categories possess an objective validity as conditions for the possibility of cognition. The reason that this treatment of apperception is of interest to Coleridge is that it offers an account of experience that privileges subjective acts of unification above sensory impressions, leading him to approvingly note that ‘it is clearly not the system of mere *Receptivity*, like that of Epicurus or Hartley’.²³ As well as integrating this element of subjective spontaneity, Kant’s deduction also represents the gold standard for purely philosophical analyses that focuses exclusively on the mind’s inherent cognitive capacities. The separation of objective and subjective contributions to experience brings with it the promise of isolating the subjective elements to provide a structural, *a priori* approach intended to discover necessary, essential truths about the nature of the mind. Apperception operates above the level of individual sensation and can be analysed independently of any specific non-subjective input. Unlike perception, which is always partially constituted by sensation, apperception can be analysed as a purely subjective process that confers unity to all the individual elements that make up consciousness.

When it comes to the unity that apperception confers on experience, Kant distinguishes between two distinct but interdependent modes: synthetic and original. The synthetic unity of apperception

²⁰ CN III, 3602.

²¹ *Marginalia* III, p.243.

²² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. and trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.250, B139. In accordance with scholarly convention, references will provide ‘A’ and ‘B’ references to indicate the first and second editions. All subsequent references use this edition.

²³ *Marginalia* III, p.242.

pertains to the way in which the mind, specifically the faculty of imagination, brings together all the streams of sensory intuition into a single, simultaneous experience organised under the categories. To reuse Coleridge's example of the view from atop St. Paul's cathedral, it is this synthetic unity of apperception which allows the view to be manageably apprehended all at once, rather than being constructed piecemeal from linearly apprehended sensations. What is noteworthy about this element of apperception is how Kant's presentation of the imagination changes between the first and second editions of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In the first edition, the imagination is given far more attention, being positioned as, amongst other things, the means by which human cognition is able to ascribe lawful regularity to natural phenomena.²⁴ Indeed, reading Kant's remarks on the imagination in the first edition makes his position seem like a clear predecessor to Coleridge's, particularly his claim that '[n]o psychologist has yet thought that the imagination is a necessary ingredient of perception itself'.²⁵ There is, however, no evidence to suggest that Coleridge ever read this version, engaging instead with the more conservative account given in the second edition, which states that '[i]magination is the faculty for representing an object even without its presence in intuition'.²⁶ One notable description which appears in both the editions ambivalently states that the imagination is 'a blind though indispensable function of the soul, without which we could have no cognition at all, but of which we are seldom ever conscious'.²⁷ Kant's use of the word blind²⁸ is striking for a couple of reasons. Firstly, considering that the imagination is meant to act as one of the main faculties in the formation of objective cognition, it is curious that Kant would use a descriptor that primarily emphasises deficiency. Secondly, and not coincidentally, talk of blindness draws comparisons with the another notable Kantian use of the term: the famous declaration that 'thoughts without intuitions are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind'.²⁹ In this instance the use of the term is far easier to explain, since in Kant's system an intuition without a concept would not even register for the subject of experience. Here, however, the notion of a concept-less intuition functions more as a negative indicator of perception's actual unity than any kind of positive account; the point is precisely that intuitions (as far as they are integrated into cognitions) are precisely not concept-less, and thus not blind.

²⁴ *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.241, A125.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.239*, A120*.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.256, B151.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.211, A78/B103.

²⁸ 'einer blinden, obgleich unentbehrlichen Function der Seele' in the original.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.193-4, A51/B75.

The reason for Kant's ambivalence about the imagination is that its synthetic activity is positioned delicately between the senses and transcendental self-consciousness. The latter half of this balance will be addressed below, but for the moment the former is sufficient to get a clearer idea of why Kant feels the need to describe the imagination's activity as blind. In synthesising the manifold of sensory intuition, the imagination must have some form of immediate connection with things before it renders them into categorised, self-reflexive representations. If the subject were able to become conscious of this first contact with the world, the whole careful demarcation between phenomena and noumena would be ruptured. As such, the Kantian imagination has to be blind in accordance with his wider epistemic commitments, since otherwise it would be a means of immediate relation to the world as it is in itself. This refusal to transgress the phenomena-noumena divide fuels Coleridge's most critical commentary on these sections of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Despite Kant's careful efforts to avoid making any comment on the nature of the world prior to the subject's apprehension of it, Coleridge nonetheless takes him to be committed to viewing the world as an unorganised manifold prior to the imagination's synthesis. His dissatisfaction with this implication comes through clearly in a pair of marginal notes, the first of which asks 'how can it be called ein mannigfaltiges hyle [a confused manifold], which yet contains in itself the ground, why I apply one category to it rather than another?'³⁰ The assumption is that, in order to be justified, the application of the categories must be responsive to some objective state of affairs, implying that the manifold possesses a definite form prior to subjective apprehension. Whilst Kantian epistemology is strictly agnostic on this question of noumenal form, Coleridge insists, as Perkins notes, 'that the source of this unity could be encountered and known'.³¹ This is further driven home in the next note, which states that 'I apply the Categorical forms to a Tree—well! but first *what* is this tree? How do I come by this tree?'³². Clearly Kant's account is in no position to answer these questions due to its underlying epistemology, but this in itself is illustrative of Coleridge's broader dissatisfaction with a strictly phenomenal account of perception that obfuscates any conception of a responsive dynamic between subject and object.

If the synthetic unity of apperception accounts for the way in which all the objects of the experience become synthesised with the mind's categories, the corresponding original unity of apperception describes how this process is supported by a deeper level of unity within the subject having the

³⁰ *Marginalia* III, pp.247-8.

³¹ Perkins, *Coleridge's Philosophy*, p.8.

³² *Marginalia* III, p.249.

experience. Put simply, the original unity is what allows for the ascription of diverse experiences to a constant self. It is not just that the world appears thus and so, but that it does so *for* the same enduring subject, the 'I' that is in possession of the experience. What is particularly important about the original unity within Kant's system is that it is the only means by which subjects can become conscious of their own existence as subjects. Whilst this presentation of self-consciousness as an autonomous, spontaneously unifying process is hugely influential on Coleridge, in its Kantian form it is also radically insufficient. Once again, the phenomena and noumena distinction is instrumental in shaping Kant's position here, as it commits him to the conclusion that the 'I' which remains constant within the original unity of apperception must be an 'I think', a self as it appears to itself, rather than an 'I am', a self as it is in itself. This is because, on Kant's view, self-consciousness is only graspable through the unity of representations, meaning that this consciousness itself must also be representational, i.e., mediated and removed from the thing in itself. Given Coleridge's metaphysical views on the relation between images and their underlying ideal principles, a self that can only be known through empirical appearances could never truly fulfil the role of grounding all other cognitions. Despite conceding that his representational view of self-consciousness produces a 'paradox'³³ insofar as subjects never truly have unmediated access to themselves, Kant is nonetheless adamant that no stronger form of self-consciousness is possible. In order to truly experience self-consciousness as an 'I am' rather than an 'I think', one would have to detach the self from any and all experience, which Kant argues would render it devoid of any identifiable content.

A peculiar aspect of Kant's argument here is the suggestion that self-consciousness in the form of an 'I am' is conceivable, but just not possible for human thought. As he puts it, 'this principle [I think] ... is not a principle for every possible understanding, but only for one through whose pure apperception in the representation I AM nothing manifold is given at all.'³⁴ The same move can be seen later on in Kant's argument when he claims that the legitimacy of the categories relies on human understanding being necessarily and exclusively synthetic. If any part of the understanding could be shown to operate without the need of the categories, their necessary status would vanish, and with it the *a priori* justification for their application. This is qualified by a parenthetical contrast to 'a divine understanding, which would not represent given objects, but through whose representation the objects would at the same time be given, or produced'.³⁵ This remark effectively

³³ *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.257, B152.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.250, B138.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.253, B145.

functions as an inverted form of the appeal to the ‘infinite I AM’ in Coleridge’s account of the primary imagination, which rather than presenting the divine mind as a negation of the human instead posits a positive (albeit distant) continuity. In Kant, however, it serves only as a reminder that ‘all our intuitions are sensible, and... cognition, so far as its object is given, is empirical.’³⁶ In light of this, it is unsurprising that Coleridge argues against the claim that the only possible intuition is sensible. One can see an earlier form of this point in a marginal note which questions Kant’s restrictive account of intuition. Coleridge writes that ‘All intuitions als sinnlich, beruhen auf Affectionen - die Begriffe also auf Functionen’ [as sensible, rest on affections, the concepts thus on functions] If sinnlich here = sensual, empirisch, how does this apply to pure Intuitions, as the immediate product of the intuitive Act? If not applicable, then all intuitions do not rest on Affections’.³⁷ Monika Class has argued that this note represents a blurring of the distinction between empirical and pure intuitions, which she traces to Kant’s imperfect mediation into English discourse through the work of August Nitsch.³⁸ While Class’s mapping of Kant’s mediation is highly convincing, it is worth questioning whether this is an instance of Coleridge misunderstanding Kant. The point is that despite Kant’s insistence that all intuitions rest on affection, he himself addresses intuitions which do not precisely meet this criterion: the pure intuitions of space and time as forms of sensible intuition presented in the transcendental aesthetic. The Kantian response to this would be that these pure intuitions are never given in themselves, only as part of specific intuitions of objects within space and time, but the fact remains that the notion of a pure intuition is not an empty one, even when considered apart from any given spatio-temporal representation. This is the point that Coleridge is picking up on: if transcendental philosophy allows for meaningful talk of the pure intuitions of space and time it cannot argue that only sensible intuitions possess content. This might seem like a minor quibble, but it has substantial implications since it loosens the strict denial of non-sensory intuitions which holds much of Kant’s negative philosophy so tightly together. This in turn allows the I AM back into the frame as a potential philosophical principle.

Coleridge’s disagreements with Kant on the possibility of non-empirical intuitions have significant consequences for the phenomenological components of his own system. If the only possible form of human intuition is empirical then reflection upon consciousness will be similarly empirical,

³⁶ *Critique of Pure Reason.*, p.264, B165-6.

³⁷ *Marginalia III*, p.242.

³⁸ Class, *Coleridge and Kantian Ideas in England*, p.177.

implicitly ruling out intuition of the ideal essences governing this empirical given. Identifying the essential structures of consciousness requires a corresponding mode of ideal intuition. One can see Coleridge trying to open the conceptual space for this kind of intuition when in *Biographia* he concedes that, so long as one limits the discussion to spatio-temporal representations, Kant ‘consistently and rightly denies the possibility of intellectual intuitions... [b]ut ... I see no adequate reason for this exclusive sense of the term’.³⁹ In order for the imagination to function as ‘the sacred power of self-intuition’⁴⁰, it must be able to intuit the mind not as a unity of representations, but as a set of ideal laws. This process, which Husserl calls both ‘eidetic intuition’ and ‘ideation’⁴¹, is what allows for the basic possibility of transcendental phenomenology, since it allows for an object which is given in intuition, yet is distinct from the empirical. In a similar vein to Coleridge’s Kantian qualification, Husserl argues that ‘we can all perform acts of reflexion... and bring them within the apprehending glance to consciousness, but such reflection is not yet *phenomenological*, nor is the apprehended consciousness pure consciousness’.⁴² For Husserl, the realisation of this mode of eidetic intuition is deeply bound up with what he calls the ‘phenomenological reduction’ (which will be discussed in detail in chapter four), whereby consciousness can become apprehended purely as its own immanent, non-representational entity. In relation to the original question of self-consciousness, David Carr argues that ‘for Husserl it is in no way correct to assert that the pure Ego is a subject that can never become an Object, as long as we do not limit the concept of Object at the very outset and in particular do not limit it to “natural Objects[”]’⁴³, echoing Coleridge’s suggestion of another form of intuition lying beyond the spatio-temporal. The entrance into this new field of intuition marks a true step into the realm of post-Kantian philosophy, since it pushes philosophy into a set of questions which must operate outside the well defined boundaries of phenomenal cognition laid down by Kant. This returns to Coleridge’s remark about Kant’s philosophy as a tool-shed, since in its deduction of the categories it presents an entire mental arsenal at the subject’s disposal, yet limits its own analysis to one of epistemic justification. To expand Coleridge’s metaphor, one might say that Kant’s concern is with assuring that the tools in the shed are fit for purpose, whereas his successors are more interested in the ways they are put to use. The precise nature of the non-empirical intuition required for this kind of philosophy is mysterious, since by its very nature it can only be represented in sensible terms symbolically, a

³⁹ *BL* I, p.289*.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.241.

⁴¹ *Ideas*, pp.11-13.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.97.

⁴³ David Carr, ‘Transcendental and Empirical Subjectivity’ in Welton (ed.), pp.185-6.

point which will be especially important for Coleridge's efforts to connect philosophy and poetry. When it comes to the most fundamental of these intuitions, the primary intuition of the I of 'I AM', Coleridge is led necessarily beyond Kant and into the more radical systems of Fichte and Schelling.

iii - Fichte

In stark contrast to his treatment of Kant, Coleridge's brief mention of Fichte in *Biographia* spends more time criticising and mocking his system than praising it, charging it with a 'boastful and hyperstoic hostility to NATURE'.⁴⁴ This accusation stems from a pronounced scepticism of Fichte's attempt to outline an absolute idealism, which aims to jettison Kant's thing-in-itself to try and deduce all experience as so many permutations of pure subjectivity. For Fichte, 'the only thing the philosopher adheres to, and from which he proposes to account for what is to be explained, is the conscious being, or subject'⁴⁵, meaning that any appeal to an independent world of objects constitutes an unacceptable dogmatism. Aside from a brief, youthful fascination with Berkeley's empirical idealism, which mainly focused on its theological overtones, Coleridge could never fully endorse any such form of subjectivism due to his refusal to abandon the notion of an objective world. In the case of Fichte, whose system had famously led to his dismissal from the university of Jena for its perceived atheism, no such ameliorations present themselves, hence the brusque treatment he receives in *Biographia*. Nevertheless, it is important to examine the ways in which Coleridge responds to Fichte's works in order to get a sense of his reaction to the more radically idealist strand of post-Kantian thought, particularly as this relates to phenomenological themes concerning the status of subjectivity. This also offers a context for the more substantial relationship Coleridge has to the Fichtean motifs in Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Moreover, it is notable how Coleridge and Fichte are in agreement as to the same central problem in Kant, the phenomena/noumena distinction, but whereas Coleridge's concerns tend towards a desire to demystify the thing in itself and reintegrate it directly into the perceptual process, Fichte conversely tries to present an account where no reference to the thing in itself is even necessary. In this regard, Fichte aspires towards a radically purified form of system building which accounts for all elements of experience in terms of the subject and its activity. In refusing to follow Fichte's attempts to furnish a complete, hermetic system of the mind, Coleridge demonstrates a staunch commitment to a more phenomenological account of consciousness as it is experienced, replete with evidence of an

⁴⁴ *BL* I, p.159.

⁴⁵ J. G. Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, ed. and trans. Peter Heath and John Lachs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p.33.

objective external world which subjectivity affords access to. As with his critique of associationism, where Coleridge appeals to experience to argue against a radical, all-encompassing contingency, so with Fichte he uses the same approach to argue for the irreducibility of the limitations placed on consciousness by virtue of existing in a world of objects.

Before delving into specific criticisms of Fichte, it is important to outline the positive role he plays in Coleridge's philosophical development. In *Biographia*, Coleridge credits Fichte's *Science of Knowledge* with 'add[ing] the key-stone to the arch [of Kant's philosophy]... by commencing with an *act*'.⁴⁶ In order to best explain this, one has to return to Kant's 'I think' as the primary principle of self-consciousness. As was discussed above, Kant's reasons for adopting the 'I think' are inextricable from the distinction between phenomena and noumena, which Fichte's system expressly aims to abolish. Thus, rather than beginning with a subject being indirectly conditioned into cognition by an unknowable object that produces a manifold of representations, Fichte's system demands that the subject become acquainted with itself without any such external determination. As long as self-consciousness remains reliant on something other than itself, it cannot have the absolute, self-founding status required for a pure philosophical system. Whilst the 'I' in Kant is still active and spontaneous, this can only be indirectly deduced after its being acted upon by the world, leading Fichte to seek for a more immediate intuition of the self in its pure, unconditioned activity prior to any determination. For all its limitations, Kant's epistemic caution at least earns him a concrete relation of self-consciousness deducible from reflection on empirical consciousness. With Fichte, empirical reflection will always be insufficient, since it can only appear as an already completed product of cognition, rather than the pure act of subjectivity which grounds it.⁴⁷ His solution, as Coleridge's summary points out, is to argue that the intuition which facilitates self-consciousness manifests in an entirely non-empirical fashion as an awareness of a pure act prior to any determinate content. This approach promises a far more direct form of self-consciousness than Kant's 'I think', but it creates a puzzle as to how the self becomes aware of this intuition at all given the restriction on any representational medium.

Since Fichte's self-affirming intuition cannot be an empirical one, it must take the form of an intellectual intuition, of the kind that Kant had claimed was impossible for any human intelligence.

⁴⁶ *BL* I, p.158.

⁴⁷ For a full discussion of the extent of this problem in Fichte's philosophy cf. Dieter Henrich 'Fichte's Original Insight' in *Contemporary German Philosophy Volume 1*, ed. Dorell E. Christensen (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1983).

As Dale Snow explains, '[f]or Fichte, intellectual intuition is the capacity of the self to be aware of its own activity, which is its first and highest reality'⁴⁸. In this respect, Fichte lays the groundwork for Coleridge's own attempts to articulate a variety of intuition, operating outside the sensible forms of space and time, which the self might use to obtain direct contact with itself. What is particularly appealing for Coleridge about Fichte's conception of directly intuiting the self's unrestricted activity is that it allowed his philosophy to give 'the first mortal blow to Spinozism... and supplied the *idea* of a system truly metaphysical...(i.e. having its spring and principle within itself)'.⁴⁹ Another significant consequence of beginning philosophy with an act is that it breaks down the distinction between theoretical reason and practical reason by making the subject's unconditioned freedom a founding principle, rather than the recalcitrant idea of reason that it was in Kant. For Coleridge, the joint promise of a bulwark against the pantheistic determinism of Spinoza combined with a conceptually self-supporting philosophical system which eliminates the gap between ethics and epistemology evidently outweighs any reservations about the mysterious nature of its foundational intuition. The term 'mysterious' here is not intended in a disparaging sense, it simply indicates an essential difficulty in satisfactorily articulating the concept in simpler propositional terms. But as Dieter Henrich aptly notes, 'people who try to work out a philosophical theory of the self must consider the possibility that forms of explication germane to the world must be given up when we make our way back to the basic principles'⁵⁰; a theory's being mysterious is by no means equivalent to its being wrong. Relating back to phenomenology, there is also the fact that, as Peter Dews observes, Fichte's attempt to discover an absolute starting point within consciousness means that he is 'obliged to abandon argumentation in favour of an appeal to a distinctive mode of experience, to a self-evidence that is metaphorically expressed as *vision*', a feature of his philosophy which is 'not fortuitously anticipatory of Husserl'.⁵¹ The same visionary idiom also plays a prominent role in Coleridge's philosophical exposition in *Biographia*, where the capacity for intellectual intuition emerges as 'the vision and the faculty divine'.⁵² For all three thinkers, intellectual intuition represents the key to an analysis of subjectivity that is not reliant on empirical, and by extension naturalistic, accounts of it. Beginning from this point of threefold commonality puts one in a

⁴⁸ Dale Snow, *Schelling and the End of Idealism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), p.41.

⁴⁹ *BL I*, p.158. For an in-depth analysis of Coleridge's philosophical engagement with Spinoza cf. McFarland (1969) and Berkeley (2007).

⁵⁰ Henrich, 'Fichte's Original Insight', p.36.

⁵¹ Peter Dews, *Logics of Disintegration: Post-Structuralist Thought and the Claims of Critical Theory* (Verso: London, 1987), p.22.

⁵² *BL I*, p.241.

position to observe how Coleridge is able to adopt Fichte's model of intuition without thereby accepting its strongly idealist metaphysics.

A common theme that emerges in Coleridge's marginalia on Fichte is how his commitments to an absolute 'I' lead him to deductions that conflict with the reports of experience. Commenting on Fichte's *The Vocation of Man*, Coleridge observes how 'the foundation-stone of Idealism... seems a gratuitous Assumption —viz— that no such power exists as that of Perception, but that <what> we so call, is only a self-consciousness of our being, as modified - i.e a mere consciousness of self-modification'.⁵³ This criticism is, in essence, the same one directed at the representational accounts of Locke, Hume and Kant, except that instead of hiding the object of perception behind an impassable veil of phenomenality, idealism simply does away with it altogether, which if anything only serves to compound Coleridge's complaint. This requires Fichte to radically re-characterise sensation as a mode of reflexive self-reference, since it can no longer be explained via any form of external impression, leading to the claim that '[s]ensation is itself an immediate consciousness; for I am sensible of my own sensation'.⁵⁴ In response to this, Coleridge asks pointedly 'whether a faculty of perceiving Things separate to the percipient... is a whit more wonderful, than this substituted Power of *seeing* Feelings'⁵⁵, repeating his conviction that perception necessitates a strong difference between perceiver and perceived. The reason he gives for being unable to assent to Fichte's argument is that he 'miss[es] the inductive Proof of the *reality* of this marvellous Anschauung [sic], or conversion of sensation into Sense'⁵⁶. The problem is that Fichte offers no actual description of sensation as it is experienced, instead simply positing a peculiar twofold process where immediate sensation is never uncoupled from a reflective, self-conscious awareness. The criticism here, which reemerges in Coleridge's disagreements with Schelling, is that Fichte is putting the logical demands of his system ahead of the qualitative nature of perceptual experience, whereas he should instead be beginning with this in order to demonstrate how the concerns of his system follow on naturally from it. This is made explicit in a subsequent note, where Coleridge forthrightly states that 'Fichte ought in a work like this to have given a full and faithful Picture of a mind with the common Belief in the actual perception of Things really per se present: and then demonstrated... that the Hypothesis or whatever the assumption may be called does not solve the problem.'⁵⁷ This charges

⁵³ *Marginalia* II, p.603.

⁵⁴ J. G. Fichte, *The Vocation of Man*, trans. Roderick Chisholm (New York: Bobbs-Merill, 1956), p.65.

⁵⁵ *Marginalia* II, p.607.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p.609.

Fichte with ignoring the burden of proof incumbent upon his account to demonstrate how one gets from the ordinary, pre-philosophical conception of sensation to the revised, philosophical conception that can function as part of a systematic deduction. By advocating a ‘full and faithful Picture of a mind’ as a pre-requisite to transcendental deduction, Coleridge effectively grants phenomenology a *de facto* legitimacy that any subsequent account must at the very least adopt as its starting point.

As well as being unwilling to define away individual objects of perception, Coleridge’s broader response to idealism also demonstrates a keenness to vindicate the higher order belief in an external world. In a note on the *Psychologie* of Adolf Eschenmeyer he writes that ‘[t]he scheme of idealism... is against the Faith of Nature, which not having been *acquired* by experience can never be destroyed by argument’⁵⁸, and in another note on Kant’s *Logik* that ‘that sense of outwardness as a sense of reality, is a Law of our Nature, & no conclusion of our Judgement’.⁵⁹ Coleridge realises that acceptance of an external world is not a belief that one arrives at through cognitive deliberation, a position he reiterates in *Biographia* when he states that the belief ‘originates, neither in grounds nor arguments’.⁶⁰ Despite this, he evidently believes that this lack of grounding does little to discredit the status of this belief, which ‘remains proof against all attempts to remove it by grounds or arguments’.⁶¹ In his commentary on Fichte’s theory of perception, which is premised on rejecting all supposedly dogmatic appeals to an external world, Coleridge declares that it ‘is assuredly not the suggestion of common sense of Mankind: we have no intuition of this, but rather a semblance at least of an intuitive persuasion of contrary’.⁶² This vindication of an overarching belief in the external world also plays an important role in Husserl’s phenomenology, which treats it as a belief to be analysed rather than a position to be defended. In this respect, Coleridge’s characterisation of this belief as a kind of ‘faith’ set apart from propositional inference mirrors Husserl’s description of a ‘natural attitude’ which subjects automatically operate within, and that takes the ongoing existence of the world entirely for granted. Since this attitude is ‘prior to all “theory”’⁶³, this attitude cannot be evaluated logically like a scientific hypothesis, acting instead as a starting point from which any phenomenological analysis must begin. The goal of the phenomenologist is not to put the ‘natural

⁵⁸ *Marginalia* II, p.534.

⁵⁹ *Marginalia* III, p.260.

⁶⁰ *BL* I, p.259.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Marginalia* II, p.604.

⁶³ *Ideas*, p.55.

attitude' on trial, assessing it by conventional standards of justification, since it doesn't function in these terms. The 'natural attitude' does not draw support from any other supplementary proposition, but instead acts as a primordial wellspring of justification that persists regardless of individual objective judgements being affirmed or negated. Conceptualised in this manner, the thoroughgoing embeddedness of this attitude has a strong influence on Husserl's conception of phenomenological method, arguing that it can never be rejected but only temporarily suspended.

Coleridge's other criticisms of Fichte develop similar phenomenological themes, focusing on specific types of conscious experience that emphasise a contingency or limitation in the activity of the subject. In a note on the *Grundlage Der Wissenschaftslehre* he comments that 'neither here nor in the *Sittenlehre* [*System of Ethics*] do we find a word of sleep or of Dreams or of Fatigue - The first & last seemingly incompatible with the all-acting always active "I"'.⁶⁴ As with the faith in the external world, it is clear that Coleridge has little interest in engaging idealism on its own grounds here, since a committed enough idealist can simply insist that, contrary to appearance, all these experiences ultimately stem from the activity of the I. Coleridge's dialectic with the idealist is not one that sets out to prove their assertions wrong, but rather prompts an examination of particular experiences that offer a reason to question the initial assumptions. This is fleshed out in an example given in the margins of *The System of Ethics*:

Blindness - or A blows out the Candle - & all the *Objectivity* of B's Ichheit [I-ness, selfhood] vanishes. How is this to be explained, if the Body itself as well as all objects external to it are no other than manifold directions of the Active principle separated by the primary law of consciousness, and becoming self-antithetic - the object being only *myself* contemplated as Resistance[?]⁶⁵

The point here is that the subject's empirical connection to the objects of the world appears far more fragile than Fichte's system of idealism seems to allow. As soon as the light is extinguished, the object withdraws from the purview of consciousness, at least visually. This might seem like a parody of idealism, wherein all that matters is the vision of an object for its being, but the point is that the idealist commitment to explaining all experiences in terms of self-activity creates a host of additional and seemingly unnecessary complications whenever the subject's view on the world

⁶⁴ *Marginalia* II, p.624.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.631.

becomes compromised. This is not to say that Fichte's system leaves such instances unaddressed; on the contrary, he expends tremendous effort attempting to show how various experiences of limitation can be traced back to a 'check' [*Anstoß*] that subjectivity performs on itself in order to produce determined objects of experience. In the *Science of Knowledge*, Fichte counts this feeling of immanent restriction amongst the fundamental qualities of subjective experience: 'as surely as I posit myself, I posit myself as something restricted, in consequence of the intuition of my self-positing. In virtue of this intuition I am finite'.⁶⁶ As Frederick Neuhouser explains, '[t]he matter of sensation is explained here, not in terms of a thing's activity upon the self, but rather as a result of an "infinite" activity on the part of the subject that is "checked" or blocked'⁶⁷; what this means is that lack of mastery the subject has over their perceptual field is ultimately self-imposed. This introduces a dynamic that would assume central importance in Coleridge's account of the imagination, the interplay of the infinite and the finite. Within Fichte's system of absolute mind, this process must necessarily be a self-reflexive one, whereby the originally infinite act of self-consciousness places finite limitations on its own productive powers. Whilst Coleridge's imagination relies on the same interplay, it commences within an already finite mind, one that exists merely in relation to the 'infinite I AM' of divine self-consciousness. By theologising the infinite element in this manner, the finite mind becomes a starting point for deduction rather than a conclusion, limited from the beginning by its encounter with a divinely created world of irreducible objective difference.

Whilst it might seem that Coleridge's disagreements with Fichte constitute a refusal to engage with his system on its own terms, this is indicative of the self-contained nature the latter's philosophical project. In the introduction of the *Science of Knowledge*, Fichte boldly declares that 'my system can therefore be examined on its own basis alone, not on the presuppositions of some other philosophy; it is to agree only with itself, it can be explained, proved or refuted in its own terms alone; one must accept or reject it as a whole.'⁶⁸ There is much in Coleridge's reaction to Fichte that bears this out, with most of the friction being generated by an inability to accept the fundamental principles of his enterprise. In light of this, it is worth considering how to conceptualise Coleridge's very selective adoption of Fichtean notions like the act of intellectual intuition whilst simultaneously rejecting the edifice built on top of this. Given that Coleridge evidently has no interest in utilising

⁶⁶ *Science of Knowledge*, p.60.

⁶⁷ Frederick Neuhouser, *Fichte's Theory of Subjectivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.48.

⁶⁸ *Science of Knowledge*, pp.4-5.

these notions to propound a systematic idealism, his adoption of it takes on a distinct significance alongside his realist convictions about the status of the external world. The importance that Fichtean idealism imparts to subjectivity through its conferral of absolute status ultimately becomes nullified if this comes at the expense both of a truly objective world and the subject's phenomenological experience of it. Without the motivation to place subjectivity on any absolute grounding, the exclusionary, purificatory function of intellectual intuition no longer serves the same function of collapsing the subject-object distinction into a one-sided monism. What it offers instead is a means of methodologically isolating acts of subjectivity in order to understand their distinctive contribution to the experiential process. This attempt to preserve a balance between subject and object forms an important connection to the third and most prominent of Coleridge's major critical influences: the identity philosophy of Schelling, which treats consciousness and nature as two halves of the same fundamental process.

iv - Schelling

Of the three philosophers examined in this chapter, Schelling is certainly the one to whom Coleridge bears the closest and most complicated relationship. This proximity demands that any analysis of their respective arguments be even more alert to deviations and differences that exist between the two philosophers, as it is only in these that one can begin to get an idea of how and why Coleridge made use of Schelling's writings in the way that he did. If one were to read Coleridge's marginalia before reading *Biographia*, it would take an impressive act of foresight to predict the extent of the latter's debt to Schelling's work. Placed in the wider context of Coleridge's broad and perceptive philosophical reading, his reproductions of Schelling seem less like intellectually bankrupt copying and more like the search for a philosophical surrogate in which to house his own inchoate philosophy.⁶⁹ As Frederick Burwick has noted, when it comes to borrowings within the *Biographia*, Coleridge draws mainly from three early Schellingian sources: *Vom Ich* [*Of the 'I'*] (1797), *Abhandlungen zur Erläuterung der Idealismus* [*Treatises on the Explanation of Idealism*] (1797) and *System der transcendental Idealismus* [*System of Transcendental Idealism*] (1800);⁷⁰ the focus here will, unless otherwise stated, be limited to examining Coleridge's relation with the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, both because it represents the closest parallel to the

⁶⁹ For purposes of conciseness, the following readings will utilise three primary points of reference: the *Biographia*, the *System* and Coleridge's marginal commentary on it. For a reading that tracks Coleridge's philosophical differences with Schelling further into later writings such as the *Logic* and the *Opus Maximum* cf. Reid Coleridge, *Form and Symbol*, pp. 105-131.

⁷⁰ Burwick, 'Perception and "the heaven-descended KNOW THYSELF"', p.127.

argument undertaken by *Biographia* and because the marginal notes on this work contain the clearest illustrations of his major reservations about Schelling's early philosophical project.⁷¹ This will be supplemented by an examination of select borrowings in *Biographia*, with the aim being to show how, once one is aware of these reservations, a number of small changes made by Coleridge become indicative of a much larger philosophical divergence.⁷² As well as continuing to chart the themes of intentionality and objectivity from the previous sections on Kant and Fichte, attention will also be paid to Coleridge's ambivalent engagement with Schelling's notion of 'identity', and how this relates to his valorisation of the work of art, as a means of setting the stage for an analysis of Coleridge's own aesthetics.

A key aim of Schelling's *System*, as well its naturalistic counterpart the *Einleitung zu seinem Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie* [Introduction to his Outline of a System of Natural Philosophy] (1799), is to take the systematic project of monistic idealism presented by Fichte and integrate it into an ontological framework that doesn't exclusively privilege either subjectivity or objectivity. This is achieved through postulating a deeper ground that underlies both the objective productive forces that shape the natural world and the subjective productive forces that shape the phenomena of consciousness, culminating in an all-encompassing monism in which subject and object are, in absolute terms, one and the same. In this respect, Schelling is addressing some of the major problems that Coleridge has with both Kant and Fichte, since his system contains no irreconcilable gap between phenomena and noumena, nor does it suffer from having to deduce everything from a singular idiom of subjective activity. This creates a dynamic, to which Coleridge would naturally be drawn, which begins with a differential connection between mind and world and asks how this is possible in the first place.⁷³ In order to answer this, Schelling demarcates between conscious and unconscious forces of production, the latter tying into the physical laws identified by natural science which govern the human being's objective existence. What Schelling tries to accomplish in the *System* is a subjective deduction of how these forces of objective production arise (and vice versa in the *Naturphilosophie*). Thus, one might say that rather than trying make nature fit

⁷¹ For a broader overview of Coleridge's relationship with Schelling cf. Orsini, *Coleridge and German Idealism*; McFarland, *Pantheist Tradition*; Wheeler, *Sources Methods and Processes*; Burwick, *Coleridge's Biographia Literaria: Text and Meaning*; Milnes, *Knowledge and Indifference*; Reid, *Coleridge, Form and Symbol*; and Hamilton *Coleridge and German Philosophy*.

⁷² Given that there is no way of concretely dating any of Coleridge's marginalia on Schelling, and that editorial estimates detail at least two readings either side of *Biographia*'s composition, it is unclear whether the text foreshadows or develops his criticisms.

⁷³ Snow, *End of Idealism*, pp.55-66. Werner Marx takes Schelling central concern to be even more radical, posing the epistemic question of how any systematic philosophy of knowledge is even possible (*The Philosophy of F. J. W. Schelling* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p.33).

within the self, as Fichte had, Schelling instead strives to expand the concept of the self to fit into nature. Whilst this approach neatly sidesteps the problems of reduction inherent to both materialism and idealism, Coleridge still expresses significant reservations about imbuing nature with an unconscious form of the same productive power that manifests in subjectivity. In his notes on *Einleitung zur...Naturphilosophie*, he remarks that ‘an unconscious activity that acts intelligently without intelligence, an intelligence that is produced by a Sans-intelligence, are positions calculated rather to startle or confuse the mind by their own difficulty, than to prepare it for the reception of other Truths’⁷⁴, whilst in his notes the *System* he states that Schelling’s argument:

[G]rounds itself on the assertion, “es its allerding’s eine PRODUCTIVE Thätigkeit, welche im *Wollen* sich äussert” [it is certainly a *productive* activity that finds expression in willing], in the very same sense of the word “productive[”] in which Nature “im produciren [sic] der Welt *productive* sey” [is *productive* in bringing about the world]: only that the former is “*mit*”, the latter “ohne Bewusstsein *productiv*” [productive with/without consciousness]. Now this is merely *asserted*. I deny it[.]⁷⁵

This is preceded by a lengthy and detailed note commenting on Schelling’s account of a contradiction between the independent reality of the world and the productive activity of the subject that he claims can only be resolved by assuming their identity. In response to this, Coleridge highlights the following incongruence between objective and subjective modes of production:

A wheel is presented to me generates without apparent materials the image of a the Wheel in my mind. Now if the preconception of a Wheel in the Artist’s mind generated in like manner a corporeal wheel in outward space - or even in a mass of timber - then indeed (tho’ even so I can see no contradiction in the two hypotheses) a problem would arise, of which the equality or sameness in kind of in the two Generators ~~would~~ might be the most natural solution.⁷⁶

The crux of this objection is that whilst it is clear that objects shape the nature of subjective experience, it is far less evident that the inverse is the case, that experience shapes the nature of

⁷⁴ *Marginalia* III, p.374.

⁷⁵ *Marginalia* IV, p.453.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.450.

objects. This disparity leads Coleridge to question the need to posit an absolute identity at the root of both, denying the supposed dialectical necessity of Schelling's argument. Nicholas Reid diagnoses this denial of Schelling's dialectic as indicative of Coleridge's preference for a logic of polarity which, rather than placing subject and object in contradiction, maintains the two in stable opposition.⁷⁷ Coleridge's example of the asymmetry of perceiving and visualising a wheel thus functions not as a direct counter to Schelling's arguments, but an example of the unnecessary complications that it gives rise to. As with Fichte, the wider point here is about the motivations for accepting the initial conditions of Schelling's argument. Coleridge is evidently aware that once one grants Schelling his philosophical apparatus he can do an impressive amount with it, but this only heightens the need to question its initial adoption.

There is inferential evidence within the borrowings from Schelling in *Biographia* that indicates Coleridge's unwillingness to commit to the identity thesis. When outlining how the subject-object distinction is to be approached transcendently, Coleridge's text reads: 'There is here no first, and no second; both are coinstantaneous and one. While I am attempting to explain this intimate coalition, I must suppose it dissolved.'⁷⁸ The only thing that prevents this from being a straightforward translation of Schelling's original is the phrase 'intimate coalition', which in the original simply reads 'Identität' - identity.⁷⁹ There are a couple of points to make in response to this. Firstly, on the basis of the general accuracy shown in the rest of his translations, this change cannot reasonably be attributed to ignorance. Indeed, elsewhere in *Biographia* Coleridge translates 'Identität' straightforwardly as 'identity' when he writes that 'to demonstrate this identity is the office and object of transcendental philosophy'.⁸⁰ Here, however, the identity being referred to is not an ontological identity of subject and object, but rather the epistemic identity of the belief in the external world and the belief in one's own existence. Similarly, there are several other references to the identity of subject and object in the twelve theses of chapter twelve, but these all occur within a discussion of the epistemic status of self-consciousness, i.e., that the self is both subject and object of the experience, and are thus separate from Schelling's identity thesis. Secondly, the term Coleridge substitutes in, coalition, is expressly *not* an identity, since its essential feature is that it is made up of diverse entities being brought together; a coalition of one is by definition impossible.

⁷⁷ Reid, *Coleridge, Form and Symbol*, p.117.

⁷⁸ *BL I*, p.255.

⁷⁹ Cf. *BL I* p.252n³, where Schelling's original is given in full along with most of Coleridge's significant alterations (which oddly enough does not include this one).

⁸⁰ *BL I* p.260. Cf. p.259n¹ for Schelling's original.

The decision to substitute identity, the *sine qua non* of Schelling's entire enterprise in the *System*, with a term that contrarily preserves some semblance of diversity demonstrates Coleridge's continued commitment to his stance on perceptual difference outlined above. By changing Schelling's central technical term in a manner, Coleridge demonstrates a consistent ambivalence to the ontological claim at the heart of the former's philosophy.⁸¹

In response to what he sees as Schelling's unwarranted assumption of absolute identity between subject and object, Coleridge's notes on the *System* propose an alternative that allows the subject and the object to remain distinct even in transcendental terms. He poses this in the form of a question: 'where is the inconsistency between the reality (i.e actual realising power) of the will in respect of the relative *position* of Objects and the reality of Objects themselves independent of the *Position*?'.⁸² The focus on the object's position relative to the subject introduces a perspectival element that allows for the object's independent reality to be preserved, even if the mind does give it a definite form of presentation. This relation is summarised by Coleridge's statement that 'the Will is a vis motrix [motive power], and the Mind a *directive* power'.⁸³ On this account, objects exist independently of the will of the subject, yet the mind is capable of reconciling this separation by directing its attention, chiming with *Biographia*'s presentation of 'the will itself... confining and intensifying the attention'⁸⁴ in the account of association. Coleridge glosses his point with an example that asks '[i]s the Marble of the *Statue* less really Marble, than the Marble in the Quarry?'.⁸⁵ The implication here is that, if Schelling is correct and objective and subjective productive forces stand in contradiction until they are dialectally resolved into an absolute identity, refusing to follow his logic ought to leave marble *qua* mineral and marble *qua* statue in a state of irreconcilable tension. Coleridge's example serves to illustrate how this needn't be accepted, demonstrating that the same marble can be subjectively apprehended in a number of ways, as, for instance, an aesthetic object or civic signifier, without thereby creating any tension with its

⁸¹ There is evidence in Coleridge's later notebooks that he eventually makes some concession to the Schellingian position, writing in 1825 that 'The *ground* of consciousness, i.e, that which every act of Consciousness supposes, is the identity <or Indifference> of Object and Subject; but the indispensable Condition of becoming conscious is the Division or Differencing of the *Subject* and *Object*' (CN IV, 5276). However, this still doesn't commit Coleridge to the identity of conscious and unconscious productive forces, which remains at the root of the methodological gap between Schelling's interest in pursuing the unconscious and Coleridge's analysis of conscious imaginative acts.

⁸² *Marginalia* IV, p.450.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ *BL* I, p.127.

⁸⁵ Ibid. This note may well be a reference to the use of statues in Neoplatonic aesthetic discourse as emblematic of the distinction between the raw material and the artistic forming principle. For a further discussion of Coleridge's engagement with this discourse, cf. Vigus, *Platonic Coleridge*, pp. 70-4.

objective status as a natural mineral. Coleridge thus seeks to defuse the force of Schelling's contradiction by instead proposing that the intentional relation one has to an object produces a presentation of it in consciousness that is dynamically informed by the object's being independent of consciousness.

Continuing a recurring theme from his readings of Kant and Fichte, another element of Schelling's philosophy that Coleridge takes issue with is his account of perception and sensation as an impasse requiring dialectical transcendence rather than a stable field of knowledge that can be philosophically explicated. Like much of his account in the *System*, Schelling's analysis of sensation is recognisably Fichtean, describing it in terms of a self-imposed limitation placed on the subjective activity. Since the experience of sensation is devoid of any sense of agency, this leads to the assumption that it is a passive product of an impression from the objective world. Schelling argues, however, that since sensation is entirely internal and subjective there can be no explicative recourse to an external thing-in-itself as a causal stimulus. The solution presented to this impasse states that, contrary to how it is experienced, the limitation inherent to sensation must be conceived as a form of self-limitation that only *seems* to result from external causes. For Schelling, it is only once one disregards the experience and apprehends sensation from a transcendental view that one is able to recognise 'the delusive [Die Täuschung] impression of the limitation as something absolutely foreign to the self'.⁸⁶ In complete contrast to this, Coleridge states that '*Sensation*... is never merely subjective, but ought to be classed as a minimum or lower degree of Perception'.⁸⁷ This undercuts the crucial premise of Schelling's argument that sensation is purely internal and thus requires an explanation that is grounded wholly within the self. The significance of granting perception this minimal objective status is that it is no longer necessary to discard the phenomenology of limitation as a misleading irrelevance to the philosophical process. On the contrary, if sensation constitutes a minimal connection with an object, then consciousness becomes the necessary field of intuitive evidence within which this connection is to be explained.

Coleridge's refusal to conceptualise sensation as a purely internal process has significant implications for his conception of objectivity, allowing him to grant a higher philosophical status to consciousness as the means by which this objectivity is realised. 'Sensation', he declares, 'is not

⁸⁶ F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, trans. Peter Heath, ed. Michael Vater (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978), p.54. Hereafter *STI*

⁸⁷ *Marginalia* IV, p.447.

exclusively subjective; but of all the *known* syntheses of Subject + Object it is the *least* Objective; but for that reason still objective'⁸⁸, a view that firmly allies him with at least a minimal form of perceptual realism.⁸⁹ Rather than pursuing an identity of subject and object as Schelling does, Coleridge believes the union of this opposition is already explicable within the bounds of consciousness itself, claiming that 'all Schelling's "Contradictions" are reducible to the one difficulty of comprehending the co-existence of the Attributes, Agere et Pati [active and passive] in the same subject'.⁹⁰ Whereas for Schelling the analysis of consciousness evolves as a dialectical illustration of its ultimate inadequacy, for Coleridge the possession of objectivity even at the level of sensation secures consciousness as a potential source of philosophical truth. This difference is also expressed in Coleridge's comment that 'it is a spurious logic when no answer can be given to the question "*What do you mean? Give me an instance*"'.⁹¹ In demanding an instance of Schelling's logic in action, so to speak, Coleridge demands that his philosophy be made comprehensible to consciousness itself. A version of Coleridge's frustration is acknowledged in Andrew Bowie's observation that 'the *STI* is a difficult work because it tries to tell a story for which there can be no direct empirical evidence'.⁹² The next section of note makes it clear that Coleridge is well aware of this, stating that 'every instance, Schelling could have brought, would imply an Object as the Base of the Subject'.⁹³ The 'Object' that Coleridge is referring to here corresponds to the objective forces of unconscious natural production that act as a check against Fichtean absolute idealism. As such, any 'instance' of Schelling's logic at work would retain a material element that a pure analysis of consciousness would never be able to reach.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ *Marginalia* IV, p.448.

⁸⁹ One might say, drawing on a concept analysed in detail by Hamilton (1983), that this reflects an implicit desynonymisation of 'sensation' and 'feeling' (pp.62-72), with the former being conceived as a perceptual relation between subject and object and the latter as the internalised product of the subject.

⁹⁰ *Marginalia* IV, p.451.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: Kant to Nietzsche* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p.89. Bowie compares Schelling in this instance to Freud's work in the *Interpretation of Dreams*, insofar as 'Schelling and Freud share model which entails both conscious and unconscious aspects. It ought to be qualified that in refusing to subscribe to Schelling, Coleridge is not denying the existence of unconscious factors in subjective life (*CNI*, 1554), but instead denying them strong philosophical significance, just as Husserl acknowledges what he calls 'depth psychology' as an interesting branch of study, albeit one which phenomenology ought to be kept completely independent from (*The Crisis of the European Sciences and European Phenomenology*, ed. and trans. David Carr, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p.237. Hereafter *Crisis*).

⁹³ *Marginalia* IV, p.451.

⁹⁴ Whilst for Coleridge this recalcitrant materiality constitutes grounds for suspicion, Slavoj Žižek (*The Indivisible Remainder: An Essay on Schelling and Related Matters*, (London: Verso, 1996)) conversely identifies it as one of Schelling's most important philosophical insights, one which provides an important precedent to Marx's materialist inversion of Hegel.

As with the status of identity, there are a number of instances in *Biographia* where Coleridge appears, even within his plagiarisms, to leave the door open for the philosophical sufficiency of phenomenological consciousness. One instance of this is his claim that ‘there is a *philosophic* (and inasmuch as it is actualised by an effort of freedom, an *artificial*) *consciousness*, which lies beneath or (as it were) *behind* the spontaneous consciousness natural to all reflecting beings’.⁹⁵ Whilst this might seem to mirror Schelling’s statement that ‘the transcendental mode of apprehension... is in no way natural, but artificial [künstliche]’⁹⁶, Coleridge notably retains the term ‘consciousness’ for both modes of apprehension. This is repeated later on when, in a passage predominantly plagiarised from Schelling’s *Philosophische Schriften*, he writes that ‘a system, the first principle of which it is to render the mind intuitive of the *spiritual* in man (i.e. of that which lies *on the other side* of our natural consciousness) must needs have a great obscurity for those, who have never disciplined and strengthened this ulterior consciousness’.⁹⁷ As before, this passage stops just short of being a verbatim translation by virtue of two small but significant changes on Coleridge’s part. In Schelling’s original there is no qualification of consciousness as ‘natural consciousness’, instead he speaks only of ‘dasjenige, was *jenseits* des Bewusstseyns liegt’ [that which lies *on the other side* of consciousness]. Additionally, what Coleridge gives as ‘ulterior consciousness’ is originally given as ‘geistige Bewusstseyn’ [spiritual consciousness].⁹⁸ As with the previous example of ‘identität’ and ‘coalition’, ‘geistige’ and ‘ulterior’ cannot reasonably be interpreted as the result of a straightforward attempt at translation, prompting the question of why Coleridge would choose to make such a change. The qualification that it is only natural consciousness that needs to be transcended implies a dynamic that retains a sense of continuity between natural and ulterior (or what was previously called ‘philosophic’) consciousness. For Schelling, on the other hand, there is no indication that what is given in spiritual consciousness need have any connection with ordinary consciousness at all. This follows on from the fact that, for Schelling, consciousness of any kind is by its very nature indicative of a deviation from absolute identity. The notion of spiritual consciousness would appear to do little to change this, since it ultimately still requires an object of some sort, even if this is not an object in the standard sense. One is thus presented with the perplexing task of bringing to consciousness what lies on the other side of consciousness, all the while aware that the very nature of consciousness itself necessitates a limit that denies access to the

⁹⁵ *BL* I, p.236.

⁹⁶ *STI*, p.9.

⁹⁷ *BL* I, p.243.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.243n¹.

absolute. By comparison, no such complications present themselves for Coleridge's account, since it is already clear from his marginalia that he doesn't view consciousness as inherently compromised in this way.⁹⁹

Another intriguing Coleridgean alteration in the previously cited passage occurs in the description of the dynamic that exists between consciousness and its object. In Coleridge the principle is to 'render the mind intuitive' whereas in Schelling's original it is 'zum Bewusstseyn hervorrufen', to call forth to consciousness.¹⁰⁰ Whilst this change in emphasis might seem slight, it becomes quite revealing in the context of the wider argument. A few pages before this, when Coleridge talks about philosophy's transcendental object, he cites Plotinus on the disposition which one must have towards nature, a disposition which he feels applies equally to philosophy:

[I]t is not lawful to enquire from whence it sprang, as if it were a thing subject to place and motion, for it neither approached hither, nor again departs from hence to some other place; but it either appears to us or does not appear. So that we ought not to pursue it with a view of detecting its secret source, but to watch in quiet till it suddenly shines upon us; preparing ourselves for the blessed spectacle as the eye waits patiently for the rising sun.¹⁰¹

What is being advocated here is a careful piety, an awaiting of something that is essentially other to that which awaits it.¹⁰² This relationship between philosophy and its object places the revelatory emphasis on the object, while the subject must simply be ready to apprehend it when it appears. Coleridge's choice of words now seems very deliberate, to render the mind intuitive is not to say that it necessarily intuits anything, rather it simply states its receptivity to that which may or may not present itself to intuition. This theme of awaiting intuition is also present in Husserl, who describes the process of phenomenology as follows: 'we wait, in pure surrender, on what is essentially *given*. We can then describe 'that which appears as such' faithfully and in the light of

⁹⁹ This point is acknowledged in a sceptical vein by Reid, who notes that 'Schelling's conclusion is elided: the subject is somehow (though the *Biographia* doesn't tell us how) to be privileged' (*Coleridge, Form and Symbol*, p.123). Whilst this is correct, it is worth noting that *Biographia*'s stated aim is not to provide a deduction of consciousness per se, but of the imagination and the fancy as these relate to poetic creation and critique. The justification for privileging the subject belongs to a much more developed metaphysical picture, one which Reid's own work goes some way to showing that Coleridge may well have been able to provide.

¹⁰⁰ *BL* I, p.243n¹.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.241.

¹⁰² The importance of maintaining a sense of otherness in the perceptual relation (explored in more detail in chapter six) would eventually assume supreme importance in Coleridge's affirmation of Trinitarian theology.

perfect self-evidence'.¹⁰³ By contrast, Schelling's notion of calling forth is far more active, which connects back to his philosophy of the absolute. In Schelling's ontology of identity, the absolute must actively call forth itself to itself in order for consciousness to take place, there is no sense in which it must await anything, since at the fundamental level there is no genuine *other* to respond to. For Coleridge's philosophy to countenance Plotinian piety, it must contain a genuine sense of a relation to something other than itself, and thus can never fully subscribe to the Schellingian absolute. At the level of theology this issue will become more and more acute for Coleridge, eventually leading him to distance himself from Schelling completely. On the level of epistemology, however, what this difference represents is a return to the same insistence on a robust relationship between subject and object.

The differences that have been outlined in Schelling and Coleridge's distinct conceptions of objectivity and subjectivity have a major bearing on their respective attempts to bring together a transcendental philosophy of consciousness with an aesthetic account of artistic creation.¹⁰⁴ In order to deduce the absolute identity of subject and object that forms the crux of his philosophical system, Schelling argues that what is needed is a particular form of direct intuition that is able to bear witness to the unity of both. The problem, as was noted above, is that any intuition that can be contained within conscious reflection will always elide the unconscious processes that form a necessary part of the identity thesis. The promise offered by the artwork is that whilst it might originate subjectively in the conscious will of the artist, the fact of its realisation requires that it also manifest the objective unconscious forces that guide the artist's creation beyond this willing. In contrast to a natural object like a plant, which is an unconscious product shaped by unconscious forces, an aesthetic object is, as James Engell explains, 'unmistakably a part of the world, a part of nature, yet also a part fashioned by a free act of mind'.¹⁰⁵ As Schelling puts it, 'the self must begin (subjectively) with consciousness, and end without consciousness, or *objectively*; the self is conscious in respect of production, unconscious in regard to the product'.¹⁰⁶ The completed work of

¹⁰³ *Ideas*, p.186.

¹⁰⁴ This account is deliberately limited to a strict comparison between the accounts of art provided in the *System* and *Biographia* in order to emphasise a difference that opens up the role played by imagination in the latter. The evolution of Schelling's theories of both art and mythology in works such as the *Philosophy of Art* (1803), *Ages of the World* (1811-15) and the *Philosophy of Mythology* (1842) will not be considered here, as this would entail a substantial diversion into social philosophy and the philosophy of language that, whilst certainly worth exploring, is only of tangential relevance to the current phenomenological argument about intentionality. For extensive analyses of Schelling's aesthetics cf. Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy*, and Engell, *Creative Imagination*.

¹⁰⁵ Engell, p.307.

¹⁰⁶ *STI*, p.219.

art provides an example of an objective product for which conscious and unconscious forces of production are both necessary without being sufficient. In running the gamut of production from subjective consciousness to objective unconsciousness within a single process of creation, the combined genesis and existence of the work of art constitutes a unique testament of their ultimate identity. Art thus performs a supremely recuperative function as ‘a medium in which the ‘unconscious activity’ of nature and the conscious activity of our thinking can be shown to belong together’¹⁰⁷, resolving the various contradictions set up over the course of the *System*’s argument.

The supreme importance of the work of art at the conclusion of the *System* leads to a number of significant corollaries for the relationship between philosophy and art. Even though it provides an intuition which ‘reflects to us the identity of conscious and unconscious activities’¹⁰⁸, the artwork’s function nonetheless highlights a considerable shortcoming in the aspirations of transcendental philosophy since, as Werner Marx observes, it dictates that ‘the absolute principle is completely removed from the sphere of subjectivity’.¹⁰⁹ Without the work of art to perform this function, Schelling’s argument would never be able to truly arrive at an intuition of the absolute identity which underpins it, meaning that philosophical thought would be left perennially unable to resolve itself autonomously. As a result, art becomes valorised as ‘at once the only true and eternal organ and document of philosophy, which ever and again continues to speak to us of what philosophy cannot depict in external form’.¹¹⁰ In this sense the *System* narrativises the journey of philosophical thought which, if it were limited to its own resources, could only manage to construct a series of contradictions that demonstrate the need for a solution without ever actually discovering one. Whereas art provides an intuition that can encapsulate ‘*the whole man*’ as the union of conscious and unconscious forces, philosophy can aspire only to a ‘fraction’.¹¹¹ In this sense, Schelling’s early thought offers a more aestheticised version of the historicism that would emerge in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where instead of being framed as an open-ended process that will eventually resolve its contradictions in the fullness of dialectical history, systematic philosophy is instead presented as the culmination of a benighted view of human existence that must seek its

¹⁰⁷ Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, p.86.

¹⁰⁸ *STI*, p.225.

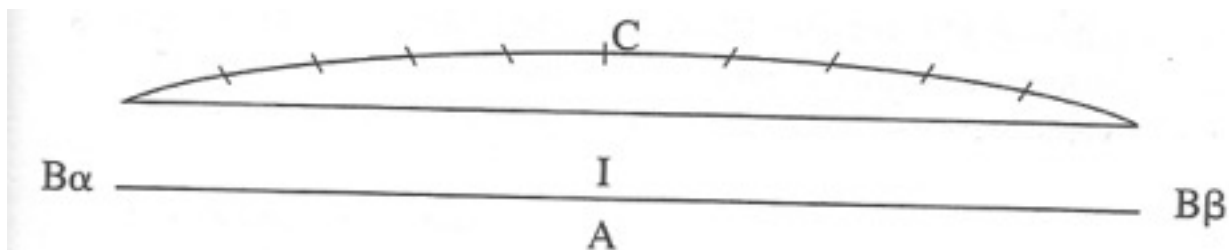
¹⁰⁹ Marx, *Schelling and the End of Idealism*, p.45.

¹¹⁰ *STI*, p.231.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.233.

resolution in the quasi-messianic intervention of the artist's imagination.¹¹² The role of the artwork in Schelling's *System* functions as what Derrida would later term a 'supplement' to philosophical thought: a presence that can only serve to recall the absence that it alleviates.¹¹³

Given that intuiting the identity of subject and object is the *sine qua non* of Schelling's account of the artwork, it should come as no surprise that Coleridge, who flatly denies this identity, would characterise the role of art in his system differently.¹¹⁴ His final marginal note on the *System* documents his dissatisfaction with the way in which 'Schelling finds the necessity of splitting not alone Philosophy but the Philosopher—a sort of *Kehama* twy-person at two several gates'.¹¹⁵ This is preceded by a pictorial diagram of two parts. The first is a line, representing the trajectory of Schelling's system, leading from point $B\alpha$ to point $B\beta$, at the centre of which is point A, which Coleridge describes as 'A Gate... the Massive Door of which is barred on both sides'.¹¹⁶ Although no index is given for what these points represent, it is at least credible to presume that the two poles of $B\alpha$ and $B\beta$ represent the two halves of the identity that Schelling's *System* sets out to deduce, with A representing the hard limit of consciousness that prevents the philosopher from working linearly from self-conscious subjectivity to unconscious objectivity. The second part of the diagram contains a curved line, labelled C, that arcs up and over the previous line to circumvent point A.



¹¹² For a developed comparison of *STI* and *Phenomenology of Spirit* cf. Marx, *Schelling and the End of Idealism*, pp. 33-57.

¹¹³ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), p.144. For an examination of the relation between Schellingian and Derridean thought cf. Dews *Logics of Disintegration* and Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity* and *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy*.

¹¹⁴ As well as there being nothing comparable to Schelling's valorisation of the artwork in *Biographia*, Reid also notes that 'nowhere in the later manuscripts have I found Coleridge using this argument' (p.115).

¹¹⁵ *Marginalia* IV, p.461. This is a reference to Robert Southey's *Curse of Kehama* (1810) which involves the titular character dividing themselves up to appear on both sides of the gates of Hell.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* A more formal interpretation of this diagram is offered by Reid, who sees it as an general indictment of Schelling's dialectical logic (which describes contradictions in need of resolution) set against Coleridge's supposedly more fruitful polar logic (which describes oppositions interacting dynamically) (pp.117-8). Ultimately, the interpretation offered here is not mutually exclusive with this, and, if anything, offers a specific example of Reid's point with regards to the final stages of this dialectical logic as it plays out in the *System*'s aesthetic conclusion.

Coleridge thus describes how when the philosopher ‘arrives at A from B α he must return back, & go round by C to B β in order to reach the same point from that direction’.¹¹⁷ Whilst it isn’t made explicit, a potential candidate for the line C is the intuition that Schelling attributes to the work of art, which performs precisely the recuperative function that Coleridge is describing. He then remarks that ‘I appear to my self to obviate this inconvenience by simply reversing the Assumption that Perception is a Species of which Sensation is the Genus’.¹¹⁸ Understood in the terms of the diagram, this means that rather than getting locked in at the gate of self-consciousness, Coleridge’s account of perception as a direct relation with an object rather than an obscure form of self-reflection blocks the reflexive manoeuvre that culminates in the appeal to art as an intellectual *deus ex machina*. In refusing to accept Schelling’s account of sensation as subjective self-limitation, Coleridge instead construes perception as a concrete connection with an external object, removing the contradiction that drives the entire philosophy of identity forward. In its place, Coleridge’s account introduces a much more phenomenological problematic whereby one is tasked with reflecting upon consciousness transcendently in order to intuit the ideal substructure that allows it to realise its connection with the world. In relation to the practice of poetry, Coleridge explains that ‘I should call that investigation fair a philosophical, in which the critic announces and endeavours to establish the principles, which he holds for the foundation of poetry in general’¹¹⁹, situating philosophy as the pre-requisite to both aesthetic production and critique. In Schelling, art is brought in to rescue philosophy, whereas in Coleridge, philosophy is brought in provide a foundation to art.

Without the structural demand to ground an absolute identity of subject and object, Coleridge’s aesthetic project is able to remain much more subjective than Schelling’s could ever be. It is crucial for Schelling that some essential part of the creative process remain unconscious, as this is what makes possible the intuition he needs it to provide. So important is this unconscious element for Schelling that he even declares that: ‘we shall have... to seek in the unconscious factor which enters into art for that about it which cannot be learned, nor attained by practice, nor in any other way, but can only be in born through the free bounty of nature; and this is what we may call, in a word, the element of poetry in art [die Poesie in der Kunst].’¹²⁰ It is essential for Schelling that art, unlike philosophy, be incommensurate with pure subjectivity, resulting in the need to situate an irreducibly

¹¹⁷ *Marginalia* IV, p.461.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *BL* II, p.107.

¹²⁰ *STI*, pp.223-4.

artistic element in the unconscious realm of natural production. In sharp contrast, Coleridge states in the second volume of *Biographia* that ‘could a rule be given from without poetry would cease to be poetry and sink into a mechanical art. It would be μόρφωσις [*morphosis*, fashioning] not ποίησις [*poiesis*, creating]. The *rules* of the IMAGINATION are themselves the very powers of growth and production’.¹²¹ This can also be seen in a notebook entry written of 1818, where it is stated that poetry ‘elevates the Mind by making its feelings the Objects of its reflection’ and that ‘the common definition’ of the fine arts is ‘that they all, like Poetry, are to express intellectual purposes, Thoughts, Conceptions, Sentiments, that have their origin in the human Mind’.¹²² For Coleridge it is the conscious, subjective side of the artistic process that has philosophical significance, since this is where the transcendental laws of mental life can be discovered and eventually conveyed. Whilst nature remains an indispensable counterpart to the mind in this process, providing a polar opposite by which it can manifest its activity, this is distinctly different from the Schellingian focus on nature as its own primordial wellspring of unconscious artistic power.¹²³

By tracing the various ways in which Coleridge engages with the various strands of idealist thought, one begins to get a much clearer sense of how he conceived of the epistemic and metaphysical framework that he sought to create for his aesthetics and poetics. This framework is something that Coleridge pursues throughout his engagements with Kant, Fichte and Schelling, always remaining steadfast in his adherence to a realist defence of objectivity and the mind’s relation to it through perception. This in turn allows for a model of subjectivity which can be reflected upon separately from its dynamic relationship with the world in order to identify the transcendental laws operating within this process. Combined with the conclusions of the previous chapter, this provides two distinct conditions that can act as supports for a phenomenological interpretation of Coleridge’s imagination. Firstly, contra empirical psychology, it must resolve to look beyond merely physical, causal interactions and define the laws by which it operates ideally. Secondly, contra idealism, its operations must be conceivable as an irreducible relationship between subject and object that preserves a genuine relation between the two without obfuscating it. With these conditions established, one can begin to explore how Coleridge attempts to realise both of these in the latter chapters of *Biographia I*, as well as the account poetic critique which follows in the second volume.

¹²¹ *BL* II, pp.83-4.

¹²² *CN* III 4397.

¹²³ Coleridge does acknowledge that ‘there is in genius an unconscious activity— nay, that this is *the* genius in the man of genius’ (*CN* III, 4397), but it is crucial to bear in mind that since he does not accept the Schellingian equation of natural and creative forces this by no means amounts to an acceptance of Schelling’s conclusion in the *System*.

III - Imagination and Intentionality

i - Noesis and Noema: The Structure of Husserlian Intentionality

Having reviewed Coleridge's relationship with associationist psychology and German Idealism, it is now possible to begin an examination of where these intellectual streams converge: the definitions of the primary and secondary imagination at the end of *Biographia* I. The first aim of this analysis will be to demonstrate how the notion of the imagination emerges from the dense metaphysical theses of chapter twelve. This will require a discussion of the infamously absent transcendental deduction, with a view to arguing that it needn't be interpreted as the philosophical lacuna which it is often taken to be. This will be followed by a phenomenological analysis of the primary and secondary imagination illustrating the central parallels with Husserl's notion of intentionality. Both represent transcendental examinations of the way consciousness constructs a meaningful, perspectival presentation of the objective world, the result of which is neither reducible to a material impression nor a purely internalised mental representation. As with any juxtaposition of philosophical concepts from different thinkers in different historical contexts, it is important to dispel any presumption that Coleridgean imagination and Husserlian intentionality are one and the same thing. Rather, what is being attempted here is a kind of philosophical translation, wherein the strong affinity of these concepts is emphasised without trying to erase their differences; the point is not to pretend that there is no gap between the two accounts, but rather to demonstrate how this gap is much less pronounced than one might first assume given the stylistic disparities. Once this comparison has been carried out, attention will be shifted onto *Biographia* II, drawing on this phenomenological reading of imagination as intentionality to understand the way in which Coleridge positions it at the foundation of his poetics.¹ This will examine the arguments made for the exemplary status of Shakespeare, looking in particular at the evaluative criteria that are used in order to justify his praise, which will be accompanied by an analysis of how Coleridge utilises Wordsworth's critical theory as a fulcrum for his own philosophical criticism.

¹ Hamilton argues that 'the explanation of the two imaginations and fancy central to *Biographia Literaria* lose their main philosophical force unless they are referred back to Schelling's ontological explanation of the world as the doubling and repetition in differentiated form of an original identity' (*Coleridge and German Philosophy*, p.7); this depends, however, on how one characterises the philosophical force that is to be associated with the imagination. If one interprets its function ontologically, as a faculty meant to provide truth about being, then the sheer amount of Schellingian architecture imported into *Biographia* makes this point hard to deny. If, on the other hand, one interprets its function phenomenologically, as a faculty meant to provide truth about consciousness, there is somewhat more room for manoeuvre in terms of avoiding the commitment to Schelling's metaphysics.

Up to this point, the term ‘intentionality’ has been described in a general fashion as mental directedness towards an object, a definition which requires some expansion before any detailed comparison with the Coleridgean imagination. The central thesis of intentionality, that all consciousness is consciousness *of* something, might appear to be a straightforward one, but it is beset by far more philosophical difficulties than its simple formulation implies. These are problems that Husserl expends a great deal of effort attempting to address throughout his writings, to say nothing of the voluminous critical commentary that follows in his wake. In order to avoid getting waylaid in the details of these debates, this section will simply outline the specific line of interpretation being utilised for comparison with the Coleridgean imagination, as well as offering reasons as to why this line has been chosen.² To reiterate, the reason for spending time on the definitions of these terms is not in the hope of locating an exact parallel of the noesis-noema structure within Coleridge’s account of the imagination, but rather to provide as clear a picture as possible of a highly technical phenomenological framework with which his own much looser theory can be fruitfully compared.

The aspect of the theory of intentionality which requires attention is the distinction that Husserl makes between the two essential elements of any intentional experience: the noesis (or noetic) and the noema (or noematic). In general terms, the noesis is the mode by which consciousness shapes and conditions a particular experience, how it makes a given object appear in the way that it does. Analysis of the noesis focuses on identifying the specific acts of consciousness that contribute to the constitution of an experience. Conversely, the noema of an experience is the result of these processes, serving as the focal point for the mind’s directedness. In talking about the ‘meaning’ of a given experience, the closest technical approximation of this term would be that of the noema, although one might also say that the noema corresponds to ‘meaning’ as a noun (a product of experience), whereas noesis corresponds to ‘meaning’ as a verb (a process of experience). At the core of Husserl’s theory of intentionality is the claim that these two elements, noesis and noema, are ‘eidetically correlated’³, meaning that any quality of the former will be mirrored by a corresponding quality in the latter; likewise, any change in the noesis will necessarily result in a correspondent change in the noema, and vice versa. A comparable Coleridgean structure is documented by Barfield, who describes how ‘the peculiar relation between act and product is implicit in the very

² A review of the various positions in these debates is given by John. J. Drummond in *Husserlian Intentionality and Non-foundational Realism* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990), as well as in various contributions to *Husserl, Intentionality and Cognitive Science*, ed. Hubert Dreyfus & Harrison Hall (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984).

³ *Ideas*, p.209.

concept of thought or mind; and that this can be demonstrated by analysis'.⁴ As early as 1801, Coleridge explores this distinction through observations of his son Hartley: 'I never before saw such an Abstract of *Thinking* as a pure act and energy, of thinking as distinguished from *Thoughts*'.⁵ By distinguishing (but crucially not dividing) the act of thought from its object, Coleridge's conception of mental activity already prefigures something akin to the Husserlian noesis, offering a promising analogue with one of the central concepts of Husserlian phenomenological analysis.

Despite being structurally positioned to offer mutual explication, the precise philosophical status of the 'noema' requires somewhat more unpacking beyond its correlation with the noesis. It is useful to begin by addressing two tempting but erroneous interpretations of this notion before offering a positive account. The first of these is a representationalist interpretation that would understand the noema as an imagistic mediator between the subject and world, akin to an idea in the empiricist sense. As was noted in the previous chapter, Husserl strongly repudiated any account of consciousness that left it perpetually mediated in this fashion, primarily on the grounds that such a view was phenomenologically untenable. Taking the example of perceiving a tree, he states that 'I perceive the thing, the object of nature, the tree there in the garden; that and nothing else is the real object of the perceiving "intention". A second immanent tree, or even an "inner image" of the real tree that stands out there before me, is nowise given, and to suppose such a thing by way of assumption leads only to absurdity.'⁶ If the noema is confined to the nebulous realm of internal consciousness, intentionality as directedness immediately loses any significance. Rather than facilitating a connection with the external world, consciousness can only refer itself to its own constructions. An alternative would be the adoption of a strongly realist interpretation, which would view the noema as identical with a real, mind-independent object. Whilst this might seem to accord much more fully with Husserl's statement above about the object of nature being the 'real object' of perception, this too must ultimately be rejected. Taking up the same example as before, Husserl explains that:

The *tree plain and simple*, the thing in nature, is as different as it can be from this *perceived tree as such*. which as perceptual meaning belongs to the perception, and that inseparably.

The tree plain and simple can burn away, resolve itself into its chemical elements, and so

⁴ Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, p.21.

⁵ *CNI*, 923.

⁶ *Ideas*, p.189.

forth. But the meaning—the meaning of *this* perception, something that belongs necessarily to its essence—cannot burn away; it has no chemical elements, no forces, no real properties.⁷

The noema must be thought of as an element of the experience, rather than a part of the object itself. A primary reason for this is that if the noema were externalised in this manner, the meaning of the experience would become statically bound to the object, rather than coexisting dynamically with an act of consciousness. A quick way to show why the latter must be the case is to consider the examples of hallucinations or illusions, where there is no real object but the subject still experiences a definite perceptual meaning. It seems clear in such instances that the mind is still engaged with constructing a meaning, and is more or less able to do so even without the real presence of the object. If the noema were identified with the real object, such cases would be wholly inexplicable.

If the noema is neither an internal image, nor an external object, then it must be something altogether different from both. An indication of how to resolve this issue lies in the final qualification of the previous quotation: the noema has no *real* properties. The way to understand this remark is in the context of chapter one's discussion of the opposition between reality and ideality, with the noema belonging in the latter category. A strong defence of this interpretation is offered by Dagfinn Føllesdal, who explains that '[n]oemata are not perceived through the senses'⁸ but are instead 'abstract and nonperceivable'⁹ entities deduced from phenomenological reflection. This interpretation is influenced by Gottlob Frege's notion of a 'sense' [*Sinn*] as outlined in his *Sense and Reference* (1892), which it used to explain how two words can refer to the same external object but differ in their meaning, the famous example being that 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' both refer to the planet Venus, and thus share the same reference, but are still capable of having distinct senses or meanings.¹⁰ Understood in these terms, the noema neither mediates the object nor manifests in it, but instead denotes the way in which the object is comprehended in an abstract fashion, alleviating the problem of having to locate the meaning of an experience on a continuum between fictitious psychological construct and objective physical thing. On this interpretation, the noema doesn't facilitate a connection with the world by piercing through a veil of representations,

⁷ *Ideas*, p.187.

⁸ Dagfinn Føllesdal, 'The notion of Noema' in Dreyfus & Hall (eds.), p.77.

⁹ *Ibid.* p.78.

¹⁰ Gottlob Frege, 'On *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*' in *The Frege Reader*, ed. Michael Beaney (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

or by statically impressing itself upon the subject, but by allowing certain experiences to be comprehended as objective. The specific affinities between Føllesdal's abstract interpretation of the noema and Coleridge's conception of the imagination will be worked out in detail below, but in broad terms the emphasis on ideality offers two main benefits. Firstly, it offers an understanding of the imagination's 'shaping' or 'forming' capabilities that distances these terms from any strongly metaphysical implications of altering the nature of mind-independent reality. Secondly, it helps to better explain Coleridge's view on the interaction between the imagination, reason and sense which keeps all three distinct in their respective contributions to experience. Thirdly, insofar as it introduces a new conceptual entity that isn't reducible either to a representation or an external object, it chimes with Coleridge's insistence that the imagination's creations be thought of as a 'tertium aliquid' or 'third something' that partakes of both.

ii - The road to the imagination: consciousness and its world of objects

Whilst Coleridge's richest and most well known definitions of the imagination come at the close of *Biographia*'s thirteenth chapter, one must first reconstruct the context from which these definitions emerge. This serves both as means of demystifying the imposing philosophical edifice of chapter twelve and as a response to the claim made by Thomas McFarland that 'there [is] no preparation for the threefold distinction of Chapter Thirteen... even in the *Biographia*'.¹¹ The opening sections can be summarised without extensive commentary, as they essentially consist of an eloquent appeal to readerly charity and a candid forewarning that convinced adherents of common sense philosophy or mechanistic materialism are unlikely to find much that will make them change their views. There then follows a number of general remarks about Coleridge's intended philosophical methodology, the first of which emphasises the transcendental nature of his enquiry through an elaborate metaphor of a mountainous landscape. One remark that is worth paying attention to here is when Coleridge distinguishes this mode of transcendental thought 'both from mere reflection and *re*-presentation on the one hand, and on the other from those flights of lawless speculation which abandoned by *all* distinct consciousness... are justly condemned, as *transcendent*'.¹² The distinction between transcendental and transcendent is straightforwardly Kantian, but whereas in Kant the

¹¹ Thomas McFarland, 'The origin and significance of Coleridge's Theory of secondary imagination' in *New Perspectives on Coleridge and Wordsworth*, ed. Geoffrey Hartman (London: Columbia University Press, 1972), pp. 196-7.

¹² *BL* I, p.237.

transcendental is defined in terms of apprehending general concepts¹³ discoverable by pure reason, Coleridge outlines it (partially negatively by comparison with the transcendent) as its own mode of distinct consciousness, albeit one which abstracts from ‘mere reflection and *re*-presentation’. This is developed in the first mention of the imagination in the chapter, specifically the ‘philosophic imagination’ as ‘the sacred power of self-intuition’.¹⁴ This is an importantly anti-Kantian gesture, as it positions transcendental philosophy not as an exercise in deducing the epistemic boundaries of human cognition, but as an immediate, imaginative engagement with consciousness by consciousness.

Having offered this brief mention of the philosophical imagination as a means of self-intuition, Coleridge moves swiftly on to the question of where to ground his philosophical system, leading him to offer ‘some preliminary remarks on the introduction of POSTULATES in philosophy’.¹⁵ In methodological terms, the question of the postulate concerns whether it is legitimate to simply state a foundational principle at the outset without the need for further argument, the most famous example being Kant’s postulation of freedom as the basis for a robust notion of ethical will and responsibility. For Schelling, the solution to this problem comes in the form of his philosophy of art, which frames imaginative works as an aesthetic equivalent to the postulate from which philosophy could discover its ground.¹⁶ Despite these sections containing some of Coleridge’s most extensive borrowings from Schelling, Elinor Shaffer rightly points out that much of this simply repeats Schelling’s overview of the issue and stops short of following him in his positive solutions.¹⁷ In detailing the various ways in which Coleridge avoids wholeheartedly aligning with Schelling, Shaffer remarks that ‘Coleridge’s avoidance of the postulate is part of his persistent attempt to incorporate certain aspects of empiricism into his philosophy...[,] [h]e holds to the importance of objects in our experience and to the immediacy of our sense of their reality’.¹⁸ In terms of Coleridge’s own aesthetics, what this would mean is that rather than exalting the artwork as that which originally unites subject and object, he instead retains a faith that this unity is discoverable within the objective relations that the subject has with the world through consciousness. This is

¹³ Cf. *Critique of Pure Reason*, ‘I call all cognition transcendental that is occupied not so much with objects but rather with our *a priori* concepts of objects in general’ (p.133, A11/B25).

¹⁴ *BL* I, p.241.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.247.

¹⁶ *STI*, p.232.

¹⁷ Elinor Shaffer, ‘The “Postulates in Philosophy” in the “Biographia Literaria”’, *Comparative Literature Studies*, 7.3 (1970), 297-313.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.309.

reflected in the one postulate that Coleridge does grant to philosophy: 'the heaven-descended KNOW THYSELF'¹⁹, expressing the conviction that philosophy can discover its own foundational principles through reflections on self-consciousness. This not only strongly reinstates philosophy's autonomy in discovering its own first principles, but in conjunction with the previous remarks about 'self-intuition' sets up the imagination as an integral faculty in the realisation of this goal.

The remainder of chapter twelve predominantly consists of Coleridge's attempt to outline the realm of self-consciousness within which transcendental philosophy can conduct its investigations. Continuing to draw on Schelling, he observes that 'during the act of knowledge itself, the objective and the subjective are so instantly united, that we cannot determine to which of the two priority belongs.'²⁰ This leads on to the question of whether one must grant philosophical primacy to the object or the subject. Regarding the former, Coleridge seems content to allocate explanatory responsibility to an expansive conception of natural science, wherein the understanding of nature becomes ever more purified until it is cleansed of all sensibility and operates as a totality of purely ideal laws. The more pertinent consideration from a philosophical perspective concerns the questions that arise when the subjective is taken as primary. A striking element of this section is Coleridge's advocacy of a specifically Cartesian rigour aimed at the 'purification of the mind'²¹ from misleading presuppositions. This is not only noteworthy for the fact that Coleridge elsewhere expresses considerable reservations about Cartesian philosophy²², but also because it appears nowhere in the Schelling text from which the rest of the passage borrows freely. What this indicates is that, despite his reservations about Descartes' metaphysics, Coleridge clearly feels that the method of systematic doubt possesses a strong enough affinity with his own approach to merit an overt reference in the middle of an otherwise unbroken translation. This merit springs from the promise of Cartesian doubt to reach 'those original and innate prejudices which nature herself has planted in man'²³, prejudices which must come under scrutiny in the search for fundamental philosophical principles. A similarly qualified advocacy of Cartesian doubt comes to form the heart of Husserl's phenomenology, becoming most explicit in his indicatively named *Cartesian Meditations* lectures given in 1929. Here Husserl argues that the way to true phenomenology

¹⁹ *BL* I, p.252.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.255.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.258.

²² In earlier chapters of *BL* Coleridge declares Descartes to have been the originator of the 'fanciful hypothesis of *material ideas*' (p.98*) and claims his substance Dualism to have been 'exploded' (p.127). He also produces a lengthy footnote later on in chapter twelve railing against the 'objectionable' formulation of *cogito ergo sum* (p.276*).

²³ *Ibid.*

requires a provisional acceptance of the Cartesian method in order to ‘take a radical turn: from naive Objectivism to transcendental subjectivism’.²⁴ Of central importance to both Coleridge and Husserl is the way in which Cartesian doubt recasts the status of the objective world as a set of beliefs sustained through the accomplishments of consciousness. The point is not that such doubt might prove these beliefs in the external world to be illusory, but that it shows how the world is not given absolutely, since its existence can be rationally doubted. In this regard, the ‘world’ in a transcendental sense can begin to be thought of as partially the result of an affirmative belief in objectivity (however tacit) that originates in subjectivity; as Husserl puts it in *Ideas*: ‘[r]eality and world, here used, are just titles for certain valid unities of meaning, namely, unities of “meaning” related to certain organisations of pure absolute consciousness which dispense meaning and show forth its validity in certain *essentially* fixed specific ways.’²⁵ In light of this, the task of a transcendental phenomenology is to outline these dispensations of meaning in as systematic a way as possible.

The peculiar status of the belief in an external world is summarised by Coleridge when he remarks that it ‘originates... neither in grounds or arguments, and yet on the other hand remains proof against all attempts to remove it by grounds or arguments’.²⁶ The world is never securely deduced, either rationally or empirically, but whereas this would normally disqualify it from consideration, its very primacy makes it impossible to reject in any strong sense; as Barfield rightly observes, it is ‘naive realism, not as doctrine but as common experience and common sense’.²⁷ Viewed in this way, the withdrawal into transcendental consciousness takes on a particular significance, it doesn’t seek to prove the real existence of the world, nor to dissolve into a mental construct, but instead presents the claim that if philosophical legitimacy is to be conferred upon it, one can only find this in the relationships between the world of objects and the acts of consciousness. Coleridge proceeds to further borrowing from Schelling’s *System*, arguing that the ‘prejudice’ of belief in the external world is cognate with another, one which concerns the being of the self, the act of self-affirmation expressed by the ‘I AM’.²⁸ But whereas belief in the external world is undermined by systematic doubt, belief in the being of the self and its self-consciousness is impervious even to this, granting it philosophical precedence as ‘the fixt point, to which for *us* all is morticed and annexed, [and], needs

²⁴ *Cartesian Meditations*, p.4.

²⁵ *Ideas*, p.108.

²⁶ *BL I* p.259.

²⁷ Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, p.63.

²⁸ *BL I*, pp.259-60, cf. *STI* p.8.

no further proof.’²⁹ This comparison between these two basic convictions in the external world and the self leads to one of the most significant Schellingian moves in the whole argument up to this point: the claim that the belief in the external world ‘is not only coherent but identical, and one and the same thing with our immediate self-consciousness’.³⁰ Given the epistemic priority being granted to the I AM, it is unsurprising that Coleridge immediately qualifies Schelling's argument from the *System* with a passage from the *Abhandlungen* explaining why this ought not to be read as a capitulation to idealism on the grounds that it doesn't reduce belief in the world to a system of mediating representations (the irony being that this is the final position of many systems that purport to be ‘realist’). Coleridge then appends his own supplementary comment which relates directly to the preceding discussion of intentionality: ‘[i]t is the table itself, which the man of common sense believes himself to see, not the phantom of the table, from which he may argumentatively deduce the reality of a table, which he does not see’.³¹ In the context of the wider argument, the claim being made here is that attempting to explain objectivity through an appeal to consciousness will not reduce one to the other, as the object itself must always remain an irreducible part of the process. This is the full implication of proclaiming the identity of ‘there exist things outside of us’ with the ‘I AM’; an identification can never be a reduction, since everything on both sides of the equation must be wholly reconcilable.

Following on from this mission statement for transcendental philosophy, the ten theses that follow are, despite their daunting technicality, for the most part merely recapitulations of the ground that has already been covered. These begin with general methodological remarks endorsing an orthodox account of truth as correspondence to Being (thesis I) combined with a commitment to epistemic foundationalism (theses II-IV), the base of which cannot be an object or thing (thesis V) but the I AM as a self-grounding union of subject and object (thesis VI). This is then developed through a Fichtean insistence that if the I AM is to ground a philosophical system it must be conceptualised as an act of consciousness rather than an object of consciousness (thesis VII). This distinction between consciousness as act and consciousness as object plays out within the noesis-noema structure of Husserlian intentionality, specifically the notion of a pure noesis as what Husserl calls a ‘sense-bestowal’³² [sinngabung], which allows objects to become meaningfully comprehended. Whilst the

²⁹ *BL* I, p.284.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.260.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.262.

³² *Ideas*, §55.

structural claim that noesis and noema are essential correlates of one another prevents Husserl from assigning the same primacy to acts as Coleridge does, they are nonetheless an indispensable part of his analysis; in his lectures entitled 'Thing and Space' Husserl states that 'for the study of things as objects... we are led back at the very outset to the study of the unity of giving acts [der Einheit gebenden Akte]'³³ The dynamic of active self-consciousness is then framed not just as the union of subject and object, but also of finitude and infinitude (thesis VIII). This characterisation introduces an element that eventually emerges as an essential part of the Coleridgean imagination in both its primary and secondary modes, a irresolvable dynamic between finite and infinite that produces the 'inexhaustibly ebullient' process of 'finite generation'.³⁴ With active self-consciousness thus set up as a foundational systematic principle, the final two theses serve as a cautionary reminder that this primacy applies only to the realm of knowledge (thesis IX) and thus can only be said to be absolute within the epistemic sphere (thesis X), as opposed to the ontological sphere that would seek to discover the absolute within the realm of being.

Bringing this philosophical thread together with the conclusions of the previous two chapters, a broad brush sketch of Coleridge's position at the close of the *Biographia*'s twelfth chapter can now be offered. In pursuit of a theory of imagination that can provide a philosophical foundation for poetic criticism, Coleridge provides the groundwork for a more comprehensive study of subjectivity from a transcendental perspective which, in its fullest form, would 'construct by a series of intuitions... the fulness of *human intelligence*'.³⁵ In order to lay the ground for such a system, the first step is to create unequivocal distance between this treatment of consciousness and those offered by empirical psychology (associationism being the prime candidate) emphasising the inability of such an approach to apprehend the necessity of the laws that govern mental activity. Following on from this comes the mediation of Kantian and post-Kantian positions to show how these laws can be discovered systematically through a transcendental apprehension of the relation between subject and object. This keeps philosophy within the bounds of consciousness, while at the same time greatly expanding the investigative possibilities that these bounds possess. It also allows for a conception of objects which escapes the Scylla and Charybdis of a dogmatically accepted world of objects and inaccessible things-in-themselves. What is common throughout the assimilations of empiricism and idealism is a conclusion that argues for the need to articulate a

³³ Edmund Husserl, *Thing and space: lectures of 1907*, trans. and ed. Richard Rojewicz, (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997), p.29.

³⁴ *BL* I, p.300.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.286.

mediatory power or faculty that can unite their various philosophical oppositions: activity and passivity on the empirical level, object and subject on the transcendental level. It is this productive fusion of opposites that will most centrally inform the distinction between primary and secondary imagination.

Before examining the definitions that Coleridge eventually produces for the primary and secondary imagination at the end of chapter thirteen, some comment must be made on the infamously absent transcendental deduction that precedes them. This is more a question of addressing the deduction itself, or lack thereof, rather than the tragicomic letter which provides excuses for its absence. Deconstructive readers such as Kathleen Wheeler have attempted to imbue this letter with its own philosophical significance by presenting it as a performance of philosophical irony in the vein of German Romantics such as Schlegel and Novalis, self-referentially commenting on the ultimate impossibility of any transcendental deduction.³⁶ The main problem with such a reading in the context of the current analysis is that even if one grants that irony redeems the letter, it simultaneously condemns huge swathes of the preceding chapters to being, at best, a prolonged, sophisticated parody. Since a key premise of reading Coleridge's argument phenomenologically is predicated upon taking his philosophical claims as authentic positions, this section will here be taken at face value as a genuine admittance of a philosophical shortcoming, rather than the locus of a destabilising subtext. That being said, from a philosophical perspective this shortcoming ought not to be assumed, but must instead be diagnosed from the material presented up to this point. To this end, a useful thought experiment to attempt here is to imagine how the transition between the arguments of chapter twelve and the definitions of chapter thirteen might read without the performative excesses of the letter to influence the context. This should not be mistaken for a dogmatic effort to redeem *Biographia*'s argument by wilfully ignoring that which is inconvenient, but as an effort to assess it on its own merits rather than treating its failure as a *fait accompli* simply because Coleridge declares it so.

An important question to ask, and one that is not asked often enough in critical appraisals of this section, is just what a transcendental deduction of the sort promised by Coleridge might look like if it had been included. The reason for spelling this point out is that one can only declare Coleridge's omission of the transcendental deduction to be of major significance, what Hamilton calls 'a

³⁶ Wheeler, *Sources, Methods and Processes*, pp.81-106.

disabling gap³⁷, if one has some basic positive conception of what its content might have been. The defining feature of a transcendental argument is the attempt to demonstrate how certain pre-requisite conditions must pertain in order for a given state of affairs to be possible, which Milnes expresses schematically as: ‘(1) X cannot be the case unless Y is the case; (2) X is the case; (3) therefore Y is the case’.³⁸ Two of the most prominent examples of transcendental deductions from Coleridge’s sources are Kant’s deduction of the categories in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and Schelling’s deduction of the imagination in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*. In Kant, what one gets is an attempt to answer the ‘quid juris’³⁹ question how the mind’s application of categories to the data of the external world can be epistemically justified, whilst in Schelling’s *System* the imagination is presented as the faculty that can provide the foundational intuition of primordial identity through the interfusion of conscious and unconscious forces that produce the work of art. Coleridge’s intended deduction would, one can suppose, fit somewhere between these two, sharing with Schelling the conviction that the imagination is what makes possible the union of subject and object, but following a more Kantian line in the belief that the deduction of this process remains within the remit of philosophy without the need to defer to artistic productions for justificatory support. On the other hand, an important disanalogy between Coleridge and his German counterparts is that he never explicitly characterises his pursuit of the imagination as an epistemic exercise aimed at securing knowledge, but as an aesthetic investigation of the common thread between the conditions of artistic creation and philosophically justified evaluative judgement. In a broad sense, these two questions can never be wholly separated, since the normative force he seeks to provide for aesthetic judgements will ultimately have its roots in an epistemic account of how consciousness achieves its connection with the world of objects. However, it is important to acknowledge that these two philosophical endeavours nonetheless remain distinct, since the aesthetic element can still remain independently valid even in the absence of epistemic support. To demonstrate this, one could assume total scepticism about the possibility of a transcendental deduction of knowledge, and still express this element in terms of a conditional: ‘if the imagination makes knowledge possible, the salient features of this process for founding aesthetic judgement are as follows’. Whilst such a formulation is clearly inadequate for Coleridge’s wider systematic ambitions, it is sufficient to demonstrate that the phenomenological component of his argument is not entirely jeopardised by shortcomings in his epistemology.

³⁷ Hamilton, *Coleridge’s Poetics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), p.7.

³⁸ Milnes *Knowledge and Indifference*, p.159.

³⁹ *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.219, A84, B116.

To briefly anticipate the objection that the previous conclusion all too conveniently supports the current hermeneutic, there are a number of points that one can summarise in support of it from what has been examined thus far. Firstly, returning to the transcendental setup of chapter twelve, framing consciousness in terms of a relationship between two fundamental belief structures — ‘I AM’ and ‘there exist things outside of us’ — restricts the focus to the subjective element of the perceptual dynamic without either ruling the objective out as unknowable (à la Kant) or jettisoning it altogether (à la Fichte). In this respect, Coleridge’s argument largely mirrors its Schellingian source material, which likewise treats its subjectivism as a provisional stance. Unlike Schelling, however, Coleridge remains committed to an account of the imagination that remains within these subjectivist bounds, a stipulation which naturally favours a form of phenomenological description that aims to present the imagination in its essential activity. This is reflected in Coleridge’s remarks leading up to the letter, in which he proposes ‘contemplating intuitively this one power with its two inherent indestructible yet counteracting forces, and the results or generations to which their interpenetration gives existence, in the living principle and in the process of our own self-consciousness’.⁴⁰ Secondly, considering *Biographia*’s philosophical trajectory as a whole, it must not be forgotten that Coleridge has already in previous chapters provided an outline for the way in which the imagination operates on a phenomenological level through its interaction with the law of association. Had this been set alongside the definitions in chapter thirteen, rather than being situated either side of a lengthy series of tangents and digressions, it would certainly go some way to developing a fuller sense of the way in which the imagination performs the synthetic functions ascribed to it. Finally, and in connection to the point made above, if one takes Coleridge’s primary aim in these sections to be aesthetic rather than epistemic, this creates a shift in the philosophical desideratum away from logical security and towards qualitative veracity. Viewed in this way, the lack of a deduction - however one understands this - that bridges the gap between general principles and specific analyses becomes less important than the nature of the descriptions themselves, to which attention can now turn.

iii - Primary and Secondary Finitisation

In his critique of the Schellingian view of the relation between perception and sensation in the *System*, Coleridge states that ‘With me, Perception is the essential prima [prime essence] and

⁴⁰ *BL* I, p.299.

Sensation = perceptio unius [perception of a single thing] <while> Perception so called <is> = perceptio plurium simultanea [simultaneous perception of many things]... Comparative or complex Intuition is Perception'.⁴¹ In its role as the 'prime Agent of all human perception'⁴², the primary imagination is positioned as the most basic point of contact in the formation of this process, endowing all perceptions with the primordial sense of a totality of external objects, a 'world' in the transcendental sense. There is a hint of this in an earlier notebook entry of 1803 where Coleridge, contemplating the human relation to divine infinity, states that 'the Imagination bewildered by heaping Infinities on Infinities...contemplates a *World*, an harmonious system where an infinity of Kinds subsist each in a multitude of Individuals'.⁴³ Integrated into the transcendental apparatus of *Biographia* this insight becomes recast in the way that the primary imagination is geared towards the interfusion of the object and the subject at the most general level: the apperceptive apprehension of objectivity *per se*. Using the terms from chapter twelve, this interfusion can be viewed as the realisation of the overarching belief 'there exist things outside of us' manifesting through the 'I AM' of self-consciousness. This is as close as Coleridge gets to formulating a principle akin to the Kantian synthesis of the manifold, whereby cognition becomes grounded under the synthetic unity of apperception that takes place prior to any individual perception. As was discussed previously, Coleridge's reticence in following Kant wholeheartedly on this topic stems from his dislike for the implication that unperceived reality is a mere manifold, unorganised prior to the act of perception.⁴⁴ Rather than echo what he took to be Kant's denigration of the objective world, Coleridge effectively reverses the whole process by framing primary imagination as a dynamic negotiation of immanent plenitude rather than the masterly orchestration of a disordered multitude. This dynamic is framed as 'a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM', integrating the point made in the eighth thesis about the commixture of finitude and infinitude in the act of self-consciousness. Here, however, the focus shifts from the most primary act of self-consciousness to the more specific activity of the imagination, meaning that the product of this repetition is not the self, but instead the world of objects to which its consciousness can be directed. If infinite, divine self-consciousness, the infinite I AM, has the power to bring the world into being, then finite, human self-consciousness possesses the derivative capacity to at least comprehend this being as a unity. The world that is comprehended through the primary imagination is thus a necessarily limited

⁴¹ *Marginalia* IV, p.462.

⁴² *BL* I, p.304.

⁴³ *CN* I, 1619.

⁴⁴ *Marginalia* III, pp.247-8.

translation of the unlimited purview of divine self-consciousness. For a comparable sentiment, one might look to Blake's statement that 'if the doors of perception were cleansed... everything would appear to man as it is, infinite'.⁴⁵ This takes the world as it perceived by God, *sub specie aeternitatis* and devoid of presentational limitations, and employs it as a contrast to the 'finite generation'⁴⁶ of the imagination that can present some measure of its totality, but only within a context of limited human perspectives.

Moving on to the secondary imagination, the first thing to note is that Coleridge defines it specifically in relation to the primary as 'identical... in the kind of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation'.⁴⁷ The secondary imagination is involved in the same process of constituting the objectivity of perceptions, but in a manner sufficiently different to distinguish it from its primary counterpart. Given Coleridge's prior remarks about the poetic imagination being 'a superior degree of the faculty, joined to a superior controul over it'⁴⁸ there is a temptation to read the secondary imagination as the exclusive possession of able poets⁴⁹, making it akin to a concept like genius.⁵⁰ There are problems with this interpretation, however, the first of which stems from the nature of Coleridge's philosophical enterprise. On the level of transcendental critique that Coleridge is aspiring to, the aim is to understand the essential, universal features of the mind first and foremost. In this respect, I.A. Richards' treatment of the Coleridgean imagination correctly addresses both primary and secondary modes as constitutive of universal features of experience, even if his psychologicistic approach flies in the face of Coleridge's transcendental

⁴⁵ William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, ed. Michael Phillips (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2011), ll.17-19.

⁴⁶ *BL* I, p.300.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.304.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.125.

⁴⁹ This is the line taken by Hamilton, who states that 'the exercise of imagination is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the existence of poetry; therefore, we need a more discriminating definition of imagination. The primary imagination will account for the use of imagination in perception and knowledge; the workings of the secondary imagination will then explain the exertions of the poet's imagination in making poetry' (*Poetics*, p.43) See also Engell, *Creative Imagination*, p.345.

⁵⁰ The critical discussion on the primary and secondary imagination displays a tendency to overemphasise one at the expense of the other. Thus, for example, Engell proclaims that 'the imagination in its highest sense, ... for Coleridge would be the secondary imagination' (*Creative Imagination*, p.345), whereas critics like Jonathan Wordsworth ('The Infinite I AM: Coleridge and the Ascent of Being' in Gravil (ed.), pp.22-53) and more recently Graham Davidson ('Coleridge's Primary and Religious Imagination: A Prescript' *The Coleridge Bulletin*, 51, (2018), 105-116) go in the opposite direction and defend the superiority of the primary imagination on religious grounds. What all of these interpretations seem to miss is the evidently Coleridgean solution that both forms of the imagination are equally important in constituting the totality of perceptual experience, and that no such ranking of their respective importance is necessary.

aspirations.⁵¹ Given that the definitions offered for the primary imagination and the fancy are clearly pitched at this level of a universal analysis, it would be incongruous for the definition of the secondary to only apply to a particular subset of human minds. Additionally, strongly identifying the secondary imagination with the poetic imagination implicitly marginalises the relevance of the apperceptive awareness granted by the primary mode to the creation of poetry, which seems implausible. It thus seems both more consistent and more productive to treat the secondary imagination as an equally universal feature of perceptual experience, with the poetic mode being reserved for a specific quality exhibited in its operation.

Aside from the difference in degree that separates the two forms of the imagination, the secondary is also distinguished ‘in the *mode* of its operation’.⁵² If the primary imagination operates as a finitization of the divine I AM in order to make it commensurate with the human mind, a way to integrate the secondary imagination into this is as a different degree and mode of this finitization. The first point of evidence as to what sort of difference this might be can be found in the descriptions Coleridge provides for the activity of the secondary imagination: the trio of ‘dissolves, diffuses, dissipates’.⁵³ All three of these verbs designate ways in which previously established wholes become separated into parts, and although this is counterbalanced by the qualification that this happens ‘in order to re-create’⁵⁴ the question remains as to what purpose this re-creation serves. Whilst the primary imagination comprehends the unity of things, the secondary imagination is suited to doing the opposite: comprehending particularity within this unity. Rather than operate on the general level of comprehending a world of objects, the secondary imagination discriminates particular meaningful objects within this world, a point that is underscored by its ‘co-existing with the conscious will’⁵⁵ which allows for the ‘confining and intensifying’ functions outlined by Coleridge in chapter seven. In technical philosophical parlance, the primary imagination might be said to apprehend objects *de dicto* (as a general class), whereas the secondary apprehends them *de re* (as particular instances of a class). The significance of the primary imagination would thus remain stable, continuously imbuing perception with a general level of meaning, whereas the

⁵¹ I. A. Richards, *Coleridge on Imagination* (London: Kegan Paul, 1934). John Shawcross likewise identifies the primary imagination as ‘the organ of common perception, the faculty by which we have experience of an actual world of phenomena’ (*Biographia Literaria*, ed. John Shawcross, 2 vols., vol 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907), p. 272).

⁵² *BL* I, p.304.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *BL* I, p.304.

secondary constantly shifts in order to comprehend the vast array of differences and distinctions that this general meaning grounds.

An important question to ask at this point is what, precisely, is subjected to the secondary imagination's powers of dissolution and re-creation. One can safely assume that these are not meant in any literal sense, i.e. as referring to the reconstitution of real objects in the world, as this would commit Coleridge to far too strong a form of idealism. In order for the notion of an object's direct presentation to remain meaningful, it must subject the imagination to some external check on its shaping power, as was noted in Coleridge's rejection of Fichte. An alternative would be the suggestion that what the secondary imagination shapes is the presentations of objects: the ways they manifest within the finite perspective inaugurated by the primary. This is certainly plausible, but it is still not without problems, chief among which is Coleridge's strong denial of consciousness as a medium of representational appearance: a phenomenal copy of a hidden noumenal reality. On the Kantian view, the suggestion that the imagination dissolves and recreates the appearances of objects would be much easier to conceptualise, since what is ultimately given is a separate representation distinct from the object as it is in itself. For a more strongly realist position such as Coleridge's, the object itself is presented directly, meaning that many of its immanent perceptual elements can be accounted for by the passive receptivity of the senses. If therefore, the imagination is to be characterised as the faculty responsible for shaping the way in which objects appear, this needs to be understood in a manner that doesn't end up erasing the immanent contributions of the object itself received via the senses.

It is at this point that the Husserlian notion of the noema outlined above can be reintroduced as a suitable candidate for negotiating the question of what the secondary imagination shapes and dissolves. Understood this way, the secondary imagination would construct and dissolve the meaning of an experience, conceived as an abstract entity that is neither the object itself nor a representation of it. This fits with Coleridge's qualification that 'where this process [of dissolving etc.] is rendered impossible, ... still at all events it struggles to idealise and unify'.⁵⁶ The description of the imagination's activity as a struggle speaks directly to the need for its power to be potentially checked by something other than itself. From this one can infer that the possibility that the imagination might not succeed in its efforts is a very real one, real enough to be listed among its

⁵⁶ *BL* I, p.304.

essential characteristics. In his overview of intentional consciousness, John Drummond describes a corresponding ‘dynamic character of our experience, the ongoing revisions of our intentions, and their satisfaction or disappointment in subsequent phases of an experience or in different experiences’.⁵⁷ What remains constant regardless of success or failure is the element of struggle in the pursuit of idealised unity. It is the nature of the external world, in all its objective recalcitrance, to frustrate the imagination’s idealisations, often requiring the mind to rescind and revise the meanings it ascribes.

The notion of the imagination’s efforts being rendered impossible reflects an important consequence of the limits imposed by finitisation. The general effect of this is neatly summarised in Husserl’s remark that ‘[e]xternal perception is a constant pretension to accomplish something that, by its very nature, it is not in a position to accomplish’⁵⁸, namely the complete overcoming of perceptual limitations. What compensates for these essential restrictions is an ideal notion of the whole object which supplements and stabilises the incomplete perspectives:

[A]n idea that lies in infinity belongs to every external perception, the idea of the fully determined object, of the object determined through and through, where every one of its determinations would be purified of all indeterminacy, and where the full determination itself would be devoid of any plus ultra with respect to what is still to be determined, what is still open.⁵⁹

This concept is best explained by means of a concrete example, such as looking at an open book. This entails looking at a particular double page spread, the presentation of which necessitates that the rest of the pages remain largely hidden. Turning to a new page requires removing the prior page from view and replacing it with another, but the meaning of the perception remains unified as being about one and the same book, rather than a fragmented procession of page perceptions. Likewise, if one were to close the book completely, the presentation of pages would shift altogether from individual, rectangular bearers of symbols and images into a single stratified block bounded by covers which had previously been withheld from view in order to allow for the presentation of the pages inside. The point is that every partial, finite perspective of an object is related to an ideal,

⁵⁷ Drummond, ‘The Structure of Intentionality’ in Welton (ed.), *The New Husserl*, p.75.

⁵⁸ *Analyses*, p.39.

⁵⁹ Edmund Husserl, ‘Horizons and the Genesis of Perception’ in *The Essential Husserl*, ed. Don Welton (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 231.

unified notion of the object as a whole, one which could never be given in its entirety. An 1802 notebook entry written by Coleridge on his journey to Malta makes it clear that he was well aware of this dynamic at work in perception:

Every one of these sails is known by the intellect to have a strict and necessary action and reaction on all the rest &. that the whole is made up of parts, each part referring at once to each and to the whole I - and nothing more administers to the Picturesque than this phantom of complete visual wholeness in an object, which visually does not form a whole, but by influence ab intra of the sense of its perfect ... Wholeness'⁶⁰

In light of the current line of interpretation, a suitable candidate for this 'influence ab intra' would be the shaping and dissolving powers of the secondary imagination.

The final phrase in Coleridge's definition of the secondary imagination is probably the most ambiguous, proclaiming it to be 'essentially *vital*, even as all objects (*as* objects) are essentially fixed and dead'.⁶¹ Much hinges here on how one reads the two words that Coleridge emphasises. The first of these is '*vital*', a term does not appear anywhere else in the *Biographia* in an evidently technical context. One way to try and understand this it is to work backwards from what has already been established. If the imagination's shaping influence only extends as far as ideal meanings, it follows that this vitality ought not to be thought of as an objective quality injected into the world. Remaining within the limits of transcendental consciousness, it would have to refer to some element in the productive struggle of finitization as it is manifested in the flow of experience. Husserl uses a comparable expression to characterise the processes of intentionality, describing how 'the material elements are "animated" [*beseelt*] through noetic phases, [whereby] they undergo... "formal shapings" [*Auffassungen*]'.⁶² In a phenomenological context the use of both of these terms - vital and animated - carries a far more anthropocentric significance than in ordinary parlance. Instead of referring to anything bio- or physiological, the 'life' connected with intentionality refers to an integrated flow of relational, finitized meanings. Within this flow, individual objects become part of complex networks of interconnected meanings through countless subtle relations with each other and with other modalities of consciousness such as memory, judgement and anticipation. The

⁶⁰ CN II, 2012.

⁶¹ BL I, p.304.

⁶² *Ideas*, p.206.

second emphasised term is the ‘as’ in ‘objects (*as* objects)’. Given that most of the discussion thus far has been about objects in relation to subjects, the addition of this parenthetical qualification indicates that here the term is being understood in a different sense. If one takes *as* here to mean ‘in the capacity of’ (equivalent to the Latin conjunction ‘*qua*’) then objects *as* objects would imply objects in themselves apart from any imaginative-intentional apprehension. What this entails is that objects without a consciousness to apprehend them are dead in the sense of not belonging to a lived experience, and fixed in the sense of not being involved in the creative, re-ebullient flow of noematic meanings. This is certainly what Husserl means when he describes sensory data as ‘dead matter’ [toten Stoff] without the ‘animating significance’⁶³ of intentionality, since any kind of stronger claim about the nature of physical objects in themselves would run counter to the methodological constraints of his phenomenological enterprise. The claim that the imagination is ‘essentially *vital*’ ought to be understood within a similar context, which is predominately confined to exploring the operations of subjectivity *as* subjectivity.

iv - Philosophic and poetic intentionality

Aligning the product of the secondary imagination’s shaping powers with an ideal entity functionally equivalent to the noematic component of intentionality also allows some light to be shed on the relationship that Coleridge envisions between imagination and other faculties such as reason. In perhaps his most well known account of the imagination outside *Biographia*, Coleridge describes it in the *Statesman’s Manual* as ‘that reconciling and mediatory power, which incorporat[es] the Reason in Images of the Sense, and organis[es] (as it were) the flux of the senses by the permanence and self-circling energies of Reason’.⁶⁴ It is worth drawing attention to Coleridge’s parenthetical remark in the first quotation, the ‘as it were’ which qualifies the imagination’s powers of organisation, since it reflects the same ambiguities associated with ‘dissolves, diffuses, dissipates’. It is not that the imagination exercises any kind of direct influence over the flux of the senses, but rather that through the integration of non-sensible Ideas it is able to imbue this flux with a meaning beyond that which could ever be given in the shifting incompleteness of the isolated images; as he puts it in an 1807 notebook entry, ‘imagination is the

⁶³ *Thing and Space*, pp.39-40.

⁶⁴ *LS*, p.29.

laboratory in which the thought elaborates essence into existence'.⁶⁵ On the level of perception, the most basic form of this reconciliation would be between the bare presentations of the senses (what Husserl calls 'immanent object-like formations'⁶⁶) and the idea of the whole perceptual object devoid of limitations (the object as would be known by the infinite I AM). This has an important bearing on Coleridge's notion of the philosophic imagination as the central intuitive faculty in the construction of a system. In its philosophical mode, the imagination still performs the same fusion of sensation and idea, but instead of shaping a noema that balances the two, it opts instead to superimpose the ideal, essential element through redirecting its intentional stance, or as Engell puts it, 'the imagination gives reason a language and the ability to appear in concrete forms'.⁶⁷ Presented in technical terms, philosophic imagination would be a highly specialised form of noesis aimed at producing a very particular noema in which the essential 'self-circling energies of reason' take on a primary significance. This accords with the stipulation that 'the will itself', co-existing with secondary imagination, 'may arbitrarily give vividness or distinctness to any object whatsoever', including an ideal, non sensory entity such as an essence. In describing the experience of those who have mastered this 'sacred power of self intuition'⁶⁸, Coleridge details how '[t]hey know and feel, that *potential* works *in* them, even as the *actual* works on them'⁶⁹, prioritising the ideal law of the essence that transcendently fixes the limits of immanent sensory input. If, therefore, the philosophical mode of the imagination is characterised by these acts of ideational intentionality that superimpose the contributions of reason, the next question is what particular mode of intentional activity belongs to the poetic mode, and what relation these two might bear to one another.

A specifically poetic mode of imagination features prominently in Coleridge's attempts to give a philosophical account of poetic practice in the *Biographia* II, one which is applied and developed through the critical appraisals of Shakespeare and Wordsworth. By situating this poetic mode in relation to the general and philosophical modes outlined above, an account can now be given of the particular type of intentional relation that it constitutes, as well as its consequences for Coleridge's theory of artistic creation and critique. The second volume opens with a presentation of the poetic principles behind the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, these being 'the power of exciting

⁶⁵ CN II, 3158. This is reminiscent of a remark made by Merleau-Ponty in the opening lines of *The Phenomenology of Perception* where he writes that 'phenomenology is... a philosophy which puts essences back into existence' (p. vii) to capture its attempt to balance between the real and the transcendental.

⁶⁶ 'Horizons and the Genesis of Perception', p.229.

⁶⁷ Engell, *Creative Imagination*, p.338.

⁶⁸ BL I, p.241

⁶⁹ Ibid. p.242.

sympathy to the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of the imagination'.⁷⁰ These principles, whether they are taken as part of a technical discussion or merely a biographical recollection, introduce an aesthetic theme that exerts an influence over much of the subsequent argument: the classical mimetic question of how artistic, imaginative works can possibly provide truthful representations of reality.⁷¹ In the standard Platonic formulation of this problem, the artwork's value is jeopardised by its derivative relation to the sensory appearance of objects, which themselves exist in a further derivative relation with the permanent forms of things.⁷² The presentation of imagination as the faculty of finitising intentionality intersects with this formulation in a couple of ways. On the one hand, the view that all objectivity is necessarily mediated through a limited perspective which can never be brought into complete, unmitigated presence makes the task of the poet appear more problematised than ever. However, couched within a framework of intuiting the universal, transcendental features of consciousness through the application of the philosophical imagination, a renegotiation of the traditional mimetic hierarchy begins to emerge whereby essential forms can be discovered within the realm of self-conscious reflection.

The first clear indication of a connection between the argument of *Biographia*'s two volumes appears when Coleridge declares that 'my own conclusions on the nature of poetry, in the strictest use of the word, have been in part anticipated in the preceding disquisition on the fancy and imagination'.⁷³ This remark understandably garners some amount of incredulity in Engell and Bate's editorial notes, which argue that it likely refers to a longer discussion of the imagination that never made it into the final edition.⁷⁴ It may well be true that Coleridge had intended to make this connection more explicit, but it is worth examining how one might try to substantiate it. Coleridge makes the first step of this process relatively straightforward, stating that the questions 'what is poetry' and 'what is a poet' are each 'involved in the solution to the other'⁷⁵, from which it can be inferred that a work's being poetic stems from a specific kind of imaginative activity on the part of

⁷⁰ *BL II*, p.5.

⁷¹ For a broader overview of this aesthetic theme in the Romantic era cf. Fred Burwick, *Mimesis and its Romantic Reflections* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001).

⁷² As James Vigus notes, many Neoplatonic accounts had already begun to try and get beyond this apparent denigration of the artwork, arguing that rather than being a useless copy of an object the artwork also possesses the potential to become a reflection of the form itself (*Platonic Coleridge*, pp.70-4).

⁷³ *BL II*, p.15.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p.15n⁴.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p.15.

the poet. This presentation already bears a structural parallel with the noetic-noematic character of intentionality, proposing a correlative relation between process and product, act and object, where analysing either side of the pairing holds the potential to explicate the other. This structural feature is also reflected in the broad shape of Coleridge's argument, beginning with a noetic analysis of the processes that characterise the poet's imaginative engagement with the world, before working back around to trace the hallmarks of this engagement from within the artistic product. The combined result of these analyses furnishes the materials for an overall phenomenological picture of poetic intentionality.

The first components of poetic intentionality emerge out of the lengthy gloss that Coleridge provides to his remark that 'the poet, described in *ideal* perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity'.⁷⁶ This begins with a reintroduction of the 'synthetic and magical power' of the imagination, although here it is presented not just in relation to perception but as an organiser of all other faculties 'that blends and (as it were) *fuses*, each into each'.⁷⁷ The first thing to note here is the same parenthetical qualification — 'as it were' — that appears in *The Statesman's Manual*, indicating that this process of 'fusion' constitutes a more complicated relation than a straightforward amalgamation without remainder. The philosophic imagination doesn't fundamentally alter the images of sense or the ideas of reason, but rather the manner of their interrelation, and this same process of relational rather than intrinsic modification is also expressed in the famous dictum that the poetic imagination 'reveals itself in the balance and reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities'.⁷⁸ Turning to Coleridge's extensive list of the possible forms this might take, it is clear that the phenomenologically salient factor in this process is the pure act of balancing and reconciling rather than the particular oppositions, which range all the way from very general to very specific. Taking the first few oppositions, 'sameness, with difference;...the general, with the concrete; the idea, with the image'⁷⁹, all of these point to the construction of a complex, dynamic type of intentional object, the primary meaning of which is constituted in a relational manner through holding multiple views on the same thing together without allowing any one to predominate. This can also be seen in the quotation from Sir John Davies, offered explicitly as an appropriate characterisation of the poetic imagination. The second and third stanzas both depict an

⁷⁶ *BL* II, pp.15-16.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.16.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.16-17.

oscillation between a philosophical consciousness of abstraction and idealisation and a corresponding creative consciousness that reintegrates the results of this back into a more concrete reality. The third stanza is especially noteworthy for its substantial deviation from the source material. Davies' original reads,

This does she, when from things particular
 She doth abstract the universall kinds,
 Which bodillesse and immateriall are,
 And can be lodg'd but onely in our minds⁸⁰

The version that Coleridge provides reads,

Thus does she, when from individual states
 She doth abstract the universal kinds;
 Which when re-clothed in divers names and fates
 Steal access through our senses to our minds⁸¹

Looking at the disparities in the third and fourth lines, which are the most heavily reconstructed, the general sense of bringing universal kinds into comprehension is preserved, but the manner in which this process is described varies notably. In a gesture that runs counter to many of the philosophical themes of volume one, Coleridge explicitly reinstates the senses as the conduit through which abstract essential insights can 'steal access' into the mind.

This account of the poetic imagination as a power of integrating abstract Ideas into affective imagery is substantiated in the critical treatments of Shakespeare and Wordsworth. Starting with the former, Coleridge specifically frames his critical appraisal as the search for indicators of imaginative ability, attempting to 'discover what the qualities in a poem are, which may be deemed promises and specific symptoms of poetic power'.⁸² In terms of intentional structure, this represents a transition into a noematic mode of analysis that works backwards from the intentional object, manifested within the poetic work, to corroborate the noetic analysis of acts. This is particularly

⁸⁰ *BL* II, p. 17n².

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.17.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.19.

evident in the second quality that Coleridge cites as evidence of imaginative genius: ‘the choice of subjects very remote from the private interests and circumstances of the writer himself’.⁸³ The philosophical import of this seemingly stylistic feature comes through in the reverent description of how it is realised in *Venus and Adonis*:

[I]t is throughout as if a superior spirit more intuitive,... not just of every outward look or act, but of the flux and reflux of the mind in all its subtlest thoughts and feelings were placing the whole before our view; himself meanwhile unparticipating in the passions⁸⁴

Although being applied to the creative process, this presentation draws on the philosophical motifs from the first volume, specifically a transcendental disinterest directed towards the ‘flux and reflux’ of immanent consciousness. This connection becomes still more explicit when Coleridge glosses this as ‘the utter *aloofness* of the poet’s own feelings, from those of which he is at once the painter and the analyst’.⁸⁵ An essential part of this idealised poetic process involves detaching from the immediacy of personal experience, reaching ‘*behind* the spontaneous consciousness natural to all reflecting beings’⁸⁶ in the same manner as philosophical consciousness. Here, however, this transcendental drive is tempered by another force, that of ‘dissipating the reader’s notice among the thousand outward images... which form its dresses and scenery’⁸⁷, reintroducing the sensory particular as the medium through which the results of this abstraction are to be recast.

As if to qualify the re-admittance of images back into the fold, Coleridge’s next principle of the poetic imagination offers a series of functions they must play in relation to the rest of the poem. He states that ‘images however beautiful, though faithfully copied from nature, and accurately presented in words, do not themselves characterise the poet.’⁸⁸ The image must be something more than a static representation of an object, instead being integrated into a much more dynamic system of reference that incorporates it into an account of its comprehension by a subject. This is achieved ‘when a human and intellectual life is transferred to them by the poet’s own spirit’.⁸⁹ This chimes

⁸³ *BL* II, p.20.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.21.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.22.

⁸⁶ *BL* I, p.236.

⁸⁷ *BL* II, p.22.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.23.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

with the account of the secondary imagination, specifically its ‘essentially *vital*’ quality. Correspondingly, the requirement that poetic images be more than just representations of objects parallels the philosophical claim that ‘all objects (*as* objects) are essentially fixed and dead’. If all the image manages to do is recapture the object, no matter its degree of accuracy it will still be lacking a contextualisation as part of an intentional process. In Husserlian terms, failure to acknowledge this inescapable context of conscious apprehension would be to falsely isolate the noema from its corresponding act of noesis, obscuring the essential correlation at the core of all intentionality. As such, an image can only be said to be poetic ‘when it moulds and colors itself to the circumstances, passion, or character, present and foremost in the mind’.⁹⁰ Thus, as Frederick Burwick puts it, ‘the function of art is mimetic, but it imitates how the mind beholds, not simply what it beholds’⁹¹; the object of poetry only has value so long as it is successfully contextualised within a subjective frame of reference.

If Coleridge’s celebration of Shakespeare offers a positive account of the intentional stance that characterises the poetic imagination, the subsequent critique of Wordsworth’s literary theory constitutes an opposing, negative account. Focusing in large part on the preface to the 1802 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, Coleridge uses Wordsworth’s principles as a foil to his own, with much of the contention being generated in response to Wordsworth’s vexed notion of the ‘real language of men’.⁹² When Wordsworth outlines this notion in the *Preface*, there are many features that harmonise with Coleridge’s own principles, with talk of ‘the primary laws of our nature’ and ‘the essential passions of the heart’ in circumstances which allow them to ‘be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated’, leading to a ‘far more philosophical language’.⁹³ Disagreements arise, however, from Wordsworth’s claim that this more philosophical language comes when ‘men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived’.⁹⁴ This is compounded by the suggestion that those who have lived their life in rustic surroundings possess a unique access to this language purely in virtue of existing in geographical proximity to these objects rather than as a result of any process of reflection or

⁹⁰ *BL* II, p.24.

⁹¹ Burwick, *Mimesis*, p.11.

⁹² William Wordsworth & Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. Fiona Stafford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.95. The question of whether or not it is appropriate to subject Wordsworth’s preface to rigorous philosophical scrutiny in the first place is taken as a moot point here; what is of interest is what Coleridge’s response reveals about his own position.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.97.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

judgement. Even as late as 1830, Coleridge would continue to complain to Thomas Allsop that the ‘inferred dependency of the human soul on accidents of Birth-place & abode’⁹⁵ remained a central defect in Wordsworth’s work. The essential problem with this from a Coleridgean perspective is that it runs entirely counter to his transcendental aspirations by reversing the direction of explanation away from the mind’s essential constitution and towards a contingent, causal relation with a formative power inherent within certain objects. The point here is not to entirely discount any influence on the part of external objects, but to instead insist that for the philosophical poet the question must be how the mind makes this possible in the first place.

One can read Coleridge’s disagreement with Wordsworth over the innate poetic qualities of the rural poor as indicative of a much wider question about the intersection of philosophical reflection and poetic creation. The problem for Coleridge here is not so much one of exclusivity — he is just as guilty on this front — but rather the criterion used to justify it. In response to Wordsworth’s valorisations, he responds scathingly that:

[T]he rustic... aims almost solely to convey *insulated facts*, either those of his scanty experience or his traditional belief; while the educated man chiefly seeks to discover and express those *connections* of things... the indwelling law which is the true *being* of things.⁹⁶

Underpinning Coleridge’s elitist dismissal is the assumption that the rustic lacks the ability to comprehend their experiences in relation to a deeper set of essential grounds. The implicit claim here is about the meaning of the rustic’s experience, which is characterised as a passive retention of superficial information. Setting aside the questionable politics of this remark, its function within Coleridge’s wider argument is to reinforce the claim that poetic power must be predicated upon a reflective capacity to reinterpret the significance of one’s immediate experience within a universal framework. Anyone who lacks this pre-requisite philosophical imagination cannot, *a fortiori*, be said to possess a poetic one. This leads Coleridge to reformulate Wordsworth’s dictum that ‘the best part of language’ stems from the impressions made by natural objects into the contrary claim that ‘the best part of human language, properly so-called, is derived from reflection on the acts of the mind itself... [,] [i]t is formed by a voluntary appropriation of fixed symbols to internal acts, to

⁹⁵ *CL* V, p.95.

⁹⁶ *BL* II, pp.52-3.

processes and results of the imagination'.⁹⁷ This emphasis on processes and results of the conscious will, noesis and noema, highlights that even though the poetic imagination's goal is to unify, the salient feature of this for Coleridge is the elevation of the ideal to a position where it can stably co-exist with the immanent presentations of pre-philosophical consciousness. Poetic language thus derives its merit from the degree to which it is able to accurately mediate the phenomenological significance of mental activity whilst at the same time remaining within the purview of natural consciousness.

Reacting against the parochialism that he sees as inherent to Wordsworth's promotion of rustic dialect, Coleridge aligns his own position with the Aristotelean principle that 'poetry as poetry is essentially *ideal*, [in] that it avoids and excludes all accident'.⁹⁸ This prompts a footnote comparing the objects of poetic imagination and geometrical deduction, 'one of the essential properties of Geometry is not less essential to dramatic excellence... an involution of the universal in the particular...[,] [t]he chief differences are, that in Geometry it is the universal truth, which is uppermost in the consciousness, in poetry the individual form in which the truth is clothed'.⁹⁹ Like the philosophic imagination, geometrical consciousness prioritises ideal, universal elements of experience amenable to reason, the main difference being the disparity observed in the first volume which allows geometry the luxury of 'a correspondent, *outward* intuition'¹⁰⁰ amenable to the senses. Given that poetic imagination at least partially mirrors the philosophic, the comparison to geometry positions it to overcome this disadvantage. By reintroducing and reconciling this sensuous, outward element, it produces a noema that brings the image back to the fore, without erasing the ideal insight initially furnished by philosophical intuition. If the poetic imagination does in some sense build upon the philosophic, this would explain Coleridge's insistence that '[n]o man was ever yet a great poet, without being at the same time a profound philosopher'.¹⁰¹ Moreover, it would also explain why Coleridge never insists on an inversion of this principle (which would require that a great philosopher necessarily also be a great poet) since the philosophic imagination constitutes an autonomous, pre-requisite form of intentionality which is satisfied with having brought the ideal,

⁹⁷ *BL* II, p.54.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, pp.45-6.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.46*.

¹⁰⁰ *BL* I, p.250.

¹⁰¹ *BL* II, pp. 25-6. See also an earlier remark in an 1802 letter to Sotheby that '[a] great poet must be, *implicite* if not *explicitè*, a great metaphysician. He may not have it in logical coherence, in his Brain and Tongue; but he must have it by *Tact*' (*CL* II, p.810).

essential elements of an experience to the fore without any further imperative to reintegrate this back into the realm of lived experience.

Back in *Biographia I*, Coleridge argues that ‘an IDEA, in the *highest* sense of the word, cannot be conveyed but by a *symbol*; and, except in geometry, all symbols of necessity involve an apparent contradiction’¹⁰², foreshadowing the task of the poetic imagination as ‘a voluntary appropriation of fixed symbols to internal acts’. The central aim of these first three chapters has been to offer as systematic an account as possible of how this peculiar balance between immutable ideal laws and open-ended poetic creativity might be realised. To this end, the attempt to interpret the imagination as a precursor to Husserlian intentionality represents the culmination of this goal, as it provides a way of understanding how it is that poetic and philosophical consciousness can intersect so as to form the basis of a transcendental, systematic poetics. Up to this point, the emphasis has been firmly set on showing how the ideal, the universal and the transcendental operate as forces of stability, with their foundational influence tracing all the way up into the very nature of poetic composition, where they might act as guarantors for a conception of aesthetic quality that is sensitive to truth. What this account leaves out, however, is the role of the reader, and more specifically the critic, as the recipient of the poetic symbol. This relates to the contradiction described in Coleridge’s first formulation, that the symbol cannot convey the idea without framing it within a sensory medium that is fundamentally at odds with its essential nature. Its capacity to convey the idea is thus contingent upon the critic’s ability to relate to it in the appropriate way; if the poet’s imagination must mediate the philosopher’s, then the critic’s imagination must in turn mediate the poet’s. Thus, in order to complete this presentation of a proto-phenomenological poetics, some account must be offered of the way in which this transition from poet to critic is to be realised so that this contradiction might be resolved.

¹⁰² *BL I*, p.156.

IV - Coleridge's *Epoché*

i - Suspension as a philosophical function

Having laid out a continuous strand of argument in *Biographia* constituting a proto-phenomenological foundation for Coleridge's poetics, the remainder of this study will broaden into a more thematic examination of various other phenomenological topics within his philosophical prose. Remaining at least in part with *Biographia* for the moment, the first of these will be the notion of suspension, centred mainly on Coleridge's famous account of poetic faith as 'the willing suspension of disbelief'.¹ Whilst this phrase was introduced to relatively little fanfare initially, it has since become absorbed into common parlance as an established description of engagements with fiction.² Alongside this, however, it also represents the synthesis of two Coleridgean concerns about how to judge works of art philosophically. The first of these explores how and why audiences remain receptive to accounts which are devoid of factual truth, whilst the second engages with the more metaphysical question of how images, the material of poetic and dramatic art, can be brought into interaction with the non-sensuous realm of philosophical ideas. By uniting these two questions under one concept, the suspension of disbelief emerges as an important disposition for the kind of phenomenological critique outlined previously. In order to fully clarify this phenomenological dimension, the development of Coleridge's thinking about suspension will be analysed alongside Husserl's account of the *epoché*: a form of methodological suspension which brackets questions about the existence of the external world in order to facilitate a purely phenomenological disposition towards consciousness. To illustrate the ways in which this theme develops in works leading up to *Biographia*, the topic will be traced through the 1808-12 and 1818 lectures on literature and drama, the 1814 *Principles of Genial Criticism*, various letters and fragments of the 1810's and eventually looking towards its post-*Biographia* transformation in the unpublished manuscript of the *Logic*.

Framing Coleridge's notion of suspension in relation to the phenomenological themes of the previous chapters allows for an examination of the practical side of the *Biographia*'s model of criticism. Whilst much of the first volume is taken up with the belaboured definitions of imagination and fancy, pertinent mainly to the mind of the poet, the introduction of the suspension

¹ *BL* II, p.6.

² Cf. Catherine Gallagher, 'The Rise of Fictionality' in *The Novel, Volume I: History, Geography & Culture*, ed. Franco Moretti (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp.347-9.

of disbelief in volume two heralds a shift towards the mind of the critical reader. Emerging from Coleridge's lecture remarks concerning dramatic illusion³, the suspension of disbelief addresses how the critical reader ought to mentally comport themselves towards a poem in order to experience and evaluate it effectively. Despite Coleridge's dictum that the primary aim of poetry ought to be pleasure rather than truth (another principle imported from the drama lectures⁴) the establishment of a mode of criticism based on philosophical principles still requires appropriate forms of judgement to be set alongside this affective dimension. His own critical treatments of Shakespeare and Wordsworth visibly bear this out, with much of the commentary on their emotional power being coupled with supporting remarks about the extent to which either writer is being true to the nature of the human mind.⁵ This practical element also reemerges noticeably in the *Logic*, where it is presented in an overtly pedagogical context as a means of training students in the correct forms of receptivity and judgement towards their own modes of thought.

Aside from its application to poetic critique, the suspension of disbelief relates to issues which are highly salient to the distinction between reason and understanding which would come to dominate Coleridge's later philosophy. Although this distinction is covered much more overtly in works such as *The Friend*, *Aids to Reflection* and the *Opus Maximum*, it shares philosophical ground with suspension insofar as both address the inherent possibility of human mind to comprehend the world in a variety of ways. Associated with this are questions about the potential for the production of different types of knowledge, as well as highlighting the ability for one interpretive mode to obstruct or misrepresent another. Just as the truths of reason are unreachable via the understanding, the specific mode of apprehension involved in spectating a play or reading a poem likewise require a phenomenological disposition which eschews the epistemic conditions of empirical perception. This parallel also demonstrates why the willing nature of poetic faith is so important, since if there are multiple modes of apprehension that the subject can undertake then their capacity to discriminate between these and freely adopt the most appropriate must likewise come under consideration. However, whereas the distinction between reason and understanding mainly relies on a demarcation of images and ideas, the suspension of disbelief conversely shows how, under highly specific conditions, the two can become united. Whilst the topic of reason and understanding is too

³ For more on Coleridge in this context, and the wider British and European discourse surrounding dramatic illusion, cf. Frederick Burwick, *Illusion and the Drama: Critical Theory of the Enlightenment and Romantic Era* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991).

⁴ *LL* I, p.218.

⁵ *BL* II, p.21 and p.147.

large to fit neatly into the following analysis, it is worth mentioning here at the outset in order to give a preliminary indication of the philosophical significance that suspension, fully understood, has in Coleridge's thought.

ii - The Husserlian *Epoché*

Before looking at the specific instances of suspension in Coleridge's work, it is worth beginning with a preliminary outline of the role suspension plays in Husserlian phenomenology to establish the main philosophical point of reference for what follows. The original formulation of the phenomenological *epoché* (from the Greek meaning 'to suspend') is Husserl's attempt to present phenomenology as a methodological science capable of circumventing all ontological and metaphysical questions about the existence of the world independent of consciousness. The *epoché* is developed via a nuanced reworking of Descartes' method of systematic doubt, which sought to disregard any and all beliefs which could not be affirmed with absolute certainty.⁶ One of the main reasons why this Cartesian doubt is so significant for Husserl is that, well before Kant's Copernican revolution, it turns the interests of philosophy inward by '[c]hanging its total style... from naive Objectivism to transcendental subjectivism'⁷, creating the possibility for phenomenology by identifying consciousness itself as a distinct object of study. Despite this genealogical connection, Husserl's approach to suspension differs notably from classical Cartesianism in how it responds to this process of radical subjectivisation. For Descartes, who sought to vindicate the advances of the mechanical natural sciences, the onus was on trying to move beyond the realm of subjective experience in order to establish a firm connection with the world of external objects. Husserl conversely thought that the foundation for natural science was to be found within the realm of pure phenomenology, arguing that what ought to be investigated was not the possibility for subjectivity to be breached or overcome, but rather the ways in which subjectivity achieves the relationship with objects that it does; 'the point', as he puts it, 'is not to secure objectivity, but to understand it'.⁸ Whilst sharing Descartes' goal of using philosophy to provide a secure foundation for scientific investigation, Husserl believed that this could and should be achieved through providing a rigorous analysis of how objectivity judgements operate on a phenomenological level, requiring the adoption

⁶ Cf. Rene Descartes, *Meditations and Other Metaphysical Writings*, trans. Desmond Clarke (London: Penguin, 1998).

⁷ *Cartesian Meditations*, p.4.

⁸ *Crisis*, p.189.

of the appropriate disposition towards consciousness itself in order to properly examine these relations.

A crucial element of the move away from Descartes in Husserl's philosophy is understanding the different doxastic statuses of doubt and suspension, or in other words how they operate as distinct modalities of belief. Doubt is a negative doxastic relation, producing a belief that something *is not* the case, as opposed to a positive doxastic relation which produces a belief that something *is* the case. For Husserl, lived experience consists of the totality of positive and negative doxastic relations that the subject has with the world. These can range from the absolute affirmation that one might confer on a mathematical proof, through the various stages of conditional validity conferred on countless practical questions in everyday life, through to the other end of the spectrum which contains those beliefs which one negates, again ranging through various degrees of doubtful uncertainty all the way to absolute denial. The point about each of these beliefs, regardless of whether they affirm or deny, is that they all hold the potential to influence the subject in their habitation and navigation of the world, making them an essential element of the ongoing constitution of meaningful consciousness. Suspension is notable in this regard as, since it is neither positive nor negative, it is able to neutralise beliefs and disconnect them from this connection to lived experience. According to Husserl, the suspended belief 'undergoes a modification—whilst remaining in itself what it is, *we set it, as it were "out of action"*, we "*disconnect it*", we "*bracket it*".⁹ When beliefs are neutralised through suspension, they become extracted from the doxastic spectrum, and by extension from lived experience *per se*, allowing this experience to then be rigorously examined by the phenomenologist without their interpretation being coloured by that belief.¹⁰ The difference, therefore, between subjecting all of one's beliefs to doubt, as in Descartes' method, and suspending them, as in Husserl's, is a pronounced one. Cartesian radical doubt leaves the thinker in an extremely restricted position, since all appeal to a world beyond consciousness is disregarded as unreliable. Whilst Descartes's philosophy is by no means a sceptical one, his method does lead to a position which, without the appeal to the divine, lends credence to a sceptical position. Conversely, phenomenological suspension, which neutralises beliefs rather than negating them, is intended to leave the content of consciousness unaltered but disconnect the thinker from any metaphysical beliefs about it. Responding to the issue of scepticism, Husserl declares 'I do not

⁹ *Ideas*, p.57.

¹⁰ For a detailed discussion of the significance of neutrality in Husserl's philosophy cf. Marcus Brainard, *Belief and its Neutralisation: Husserl's System of Phenomenology in Ideas* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002).

deny this “world” as though I were a sophist; *I do not doubt that it is there* as though I were a sceptic; but I use the “phenomenological” *εποχή* [*epoché*] which *completely bars me from using any judgement that about spatiotemporal existence* [Dasein].¹¹ These restrictions are intended to create a critical distance from subjective experience, allowing mental states to be scientifically examined as presentations of immanent data for phenomenological research.

Rather than suspending every individual belief that implies a metaphysical position, Husserl proposes a parsimonious way of simultaneously placing them all under suspension at once. The way to do this, he argues, is to suspend what he terms the ‘natural attitude [die natürliche Einstellung]’¹², which is not a belief in the sense of an accepted proposition so much as a general, automatic mode of apprehension which permeates everyday consciousness. Put simply, the natural attitude is the unthinking acceptance of a world of objects existing beyond consciousness. To reiterate, Husserl does not propose that the phenomenologist abandon their belief in the external world as faulty or unreliable; on the contrary, he argues that this suspension is ‘compatible with the unshaken and unshakable because self-evidencing conviction of truth’¹³, meaning that it can even extend to things which one has no reason to doubt. Unlike in Descartes where the belief in the external world was ruled out until sufficient reason could be discovered for readopting it, Husserl’s suspension leaves one fully able to endorse the validity of this attitude whilst nonetheless seeking to temporarily bracket it for the purposes of phenomenological investigation. If the natural attitude is not suspended in this way, Husserl argues that it will invariably influence and distort the ways in which the phenomena of consciousness are interpreted. Rather than being able to view consciousness simply as it is given, the natural attitude leads investigators to search for explanations rooted in external systems of physical causation that ignore the nature of pure experience. It was for this reason that Husserl distanced his phenomenology so firmly from empirical psychology, which he saw as trying to explain what ought to be immanent and fundamental - conscious experience - indirectly in terms of objective relationships embedded within a broader system of physical laws. With the *epoché* in effect, on the other hand, Husserl claims that these objective explanations are made unavailable once to the natural attitude that underpins them has been put out of action, allowing the flow of pure consciousness to become the object of inquiry. The *epoché* is in this sense a neutralisation which is nonetheless productive, since unlike the desolate Cartesian doubter armed

¹¹ *Ideas*, p.59.

¹² *Ibid*, p.51, this is also translated as the ‘natural standpoint’, but the vast majority of secondary sources opt for ‘attitude’.

¹³ *Ibid*, p.58.

with little more than the affirmation of their own existence, the phenomenologist who performs the *epoché* conversely ‘lays open...*an infinite realm of being of a new kind*, as the sphere of a new kind of experience: transcendental experience’.¹⁴ The ability to open up the world of phenomenology is what makes the *epoché* so central to Husserl’s project, providing the means for a radical new foundation independent from all other sciences which operate under the natural attitude.

Another name that Husserl often gives to the suspension of the natural attitude is the ‘phenomenological reduction’, as it sets out to reduce the realm of consciousness down to the pure immanence of experience as it is in itself. Alongside this primary reduction, Husserl also identifies a second, equally important form of reduction which he calls the ‘eidetic’. The aim of the eidetic reduction is to take the newly bracketed realm of immanent experience and comprehend it transcendently in terms of its essential structures. This reduction is underwritten by Husserl’s conviction that any intuition of a factual particular can be transformed into an intuition of an essence and vice versa.¹⁵ Thus, for example, one might start out in the natural attitude with the ordinary perception of a table and subsequently perform the phenomenological reduction to bracket any belief in its objective existence. This being done, one would then be left with a shifting stream of conscious presentations appearing in certain regular or irregular ways. In order to obtain scientific insight into these various fluctuating presentations, one would then perform the eidetic reduction in order to try and comprehend the essential structures that belong necessarily to the experience, with everything else being set aside as merely contingent. This fixes phenomenology as a pursuit of necessary truths, rather than simply a series of observations about the quality of conscious experience. Husserl describes this process as follows: ‘we grasp and fix in adequate ideation the pure essences that interest us... [t]he individual facts, the fact-character [Faktizität] of the natural world in general, thereby escapes our theoretical scrutiny—as in all cases where our enquiry is purely eidetic’.¹⁶ The reason for emphasising this accompanying eidetic reduction is that it helps one to get a much clearer sense of what Husserl conceives the objects of phenomenology to be. It is not strictly the raw flow of consciousness that interests him, but rather the ideal essences underpinning it, since only these hold the capacity for furnishing universal truths about experience. In this respect, Husserl’s philosophical project stands well apart from the likes of Berkeley and Hume, even though they likewise direct their thinking towards experience without recourse to the

¹⁴ *Cartesian Meditations*, p.27.

¹⁵ *Ideas*, p.13.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.64.

an external, material world. This divergence from classical empiricism derives from understanding the ‘ideas’ of experience not as atomic sensory presentations but instead returning to a much more Platonic conception of idea as *eidos*, the essential and non-perceptual principle that makes things what they are.

There is a great deal more that could be said about the Husserlian *epoché*, as it represents one of the most controversial elements of his philosophical system, but for current purposes relating these introductory remarks back to Coleridge will be more fruitful than delving into minutiae.¹⁷ The primary similarity is that both thinkers utilise notions of suspension as a means of gaining access to objects that are inaccessible within the purview of empirical modes of perception. One sees this clearly in Coleridge’s adoption of the Kantian distinction between the agreeable and the beautiful as well as his identification of ‘historic faith’ and a counterpart to ‘poetic faith’ which can unsettle the poetic process if too many references are made to factual events and figures.¹⁸ Alongside these connections, however, it is also important to be aware of the ways in which the Coleridgean and Husserlian conceptions of suspension diverge, since these are just as relevant for establishing their respective significance. For Husserl, suspension serves the needs of phenomenology as a rigorous science by returning the philosopher to what he sees as most fundamental, the immanent nature of conscious experience which holds the key to understanding how objective natural science becomes possible. Whilst there is much in this vision that chimes with Coleridge’s Schellingian remarks in the ten theses of the *Biographia*, most notably the suggestion that understanding how ‘there exist things outside of us’ and ‘I AM’ are ‘unconsciously involved’ as the ‘office and object’¹⁹ of transcendental philosophy, he makes no use of the language of suspension in setting this position out. For the most part, the objects of Coleridge’s various suspensions are not scientific but aesthetic, seeking to understand the specific nature of audience and reader engagement with an artwork rather than providing the foundation of a grand philosophical system. Coleridge’s suspensions are also, for the most part, much more localised, applying specifically to aesthetic objects rather than to the whole of conscious life. On the other hand, and in light of the argument laid out in the first half of this study, it is clear that one can never wholly separate aesthetic critique from philosophical analysis in Coleridge. Indeed, insofar as aesthetic critique must draw on philosophy for its principles,

¹⁷ Cf. Brainard, *Belief and its Neutralisation*, as well as Dermot Moran, *Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007) and Mike Lewis & Tanja Staehler, *Phenomenology, an Introduction* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010) for useful overviews of this topic.

¹⁸ *BL* II, p.134.

¹⁹ *BL* I, p.260.

the role of suspension within this process can best be understood not as the foundational but as synthetic, allowing for the unification of these different elements within a system rather than being the bedrock of the system as a whole.

iii - Illusion vs. Delusion in the *Lectures on Literature*

Coleridge's earliest remarks on suspension can be found in his lectures on literature and drama delivered between 1808 and 1812, which attempt to characterise the mental disposition of a theatregoing audience to the events taking place on the stage. Although the focus is ostensibly on drama, Coleridge qualifies that the stage, in the sense in which he is interested in, is not limited by divisions of form and genre and 'may be characterized, as a combination of several, or of all the, Fine Arts, to an harmonious Whole'.²⁰ Taking up the example of a stage constructed forest, Coleridge argues that 'a <Forest->Scene is not presented to the Audience as a Picture <of a Forest,> but as a Forest: and tho' we are not actually deceived by the one <more or less> than by the other, yet our feelings are differently ~~acted-upon~~ affected in the two cases.'²¹ In phenomenological terms, what this distinction illustrates is how the same material object, a constructed assemblage on stage, can produce multiple intentional objects which significantly alter the meaning of the subject's experience. Coleridge's refusal to characterise either possibility as a case of deception is significant, since normally a marked difference in how an object is apprehended would imply that at least one perspective was to some extent mistaken. In logical parlance, this assumption would fall under a principle of non-contradiction: that 'A is B' (there is a forest on stage) and 'A is not B' (there is not a forest on stage, only a picture of one) cannot both be believed simultaneously. If one assumes that Coleridge is remaining true to this logical axiom, his claim implicitly posits a wholly different type of intentional relation which is independent of ordinary perception and thus presents no contradiction of it. This new relation is described in many of the ways that would later characterise the account of poetic faith, being referred to an '*analogon* of deception, a ~~voluntary~~ sort of temporary Faith to which we encourage by our own Will, because we know that it is at any time in the power of our will to see it as it is, and no longer as that which it presents to us.'²² Whilst deception is still being treated as the main point of comparison here, it is merely an '*analogon*', bearing a combination of similarities and differences. Combined with Coleridge's stipulation that

²⁰ *LL* I p.130.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

the experience be under the remit of the will, it is clear that this prototypical form of poetic faith is a long way from deception in any ordinary sense of the term.

Once dramatic engagement becomes distinguished from straightforward delusion, and by extension from ordinary perception, Coleridge proceeds to elaborate the nature of this alternative intentional relation, which he conversely terms 'illusion'. Developing the previous example, he declares that 'the true stage Illusion both in this and in all other Things consists not in the mind's judging it to be a forest but in the remission of the judgement, that it is not a Forest'.²³ In ordinary perceptual judgement the binary would be between affirmation and negation, the positive and negative doxastic relations, but here negation is instead replaced by 'the remission of judgement', suspension by any other name. By moving away from this standard binary, Coleridge's definition of illusion has a notable impact on how the dynamic between audience as subject and artwork as object is characterised. If the relevant modes of belief were still affirmation and negation, the subject would apply the same standards of judgement that they would utilise in any non-dramatic context, placing the onus on the object, in this case the performance, to avoid the pitfall of prompting a disbelieving, negative response. Whilst not necessarily being an entirely passive experience, this would leave little for the viewer to do besides maintaining the same types of judgement that govern non-theatrical experience, as if watching a play were not essentially different to surveying a landscape or looking out of a window. By contrast, once the remission of judgement enters the picture a significant portion of responsibility shifts away from the object and towards the subject. Unlike either affirmation or negation, which operate more or less automatically, this remission demands that the viewer recognise the specific demands of the dramatic context and adapt their disposition accordingly. Once the audience member suspends their capacity for negative judgement, the dramatic performance is relieved of the task of perfectly mimicking reality and can instead be judged by an autonomous criterion of value beyond the demands of mere verisimilitude.

Coleridge's resistance to characterising dramatic engagement as a form of deception or delusion is not simply an attack on a hypothetical opposing position, but an engagement with a popular critical theory of his time. A notable exposition of this theory of delusion was Richard Payne Knight's *An Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* (1806), which Coleridge would also use as a foil for the *Principles of Genial Criticism*. Coleridge's copy of the *Analytical Inquiry* is heavily annotated,

²³ *LL* I, p.130.

although the majority of these annotations are not in Coleridge's handwriting but Wordsworth's, leading to some amount of uncertainty as to how much influence Coleridge had in their writing.²⁴ Whatever the case may be, these annotations are worth examining for the way they encapsulate the debate between these opposing positions. Thus, for example, when Knight, in reference to Edmund Burke's theory of tragedy, writes that '[t]he great author... asserts that *the nearer tragedy approaches the reality, and the further it removes us from all idea of fiction, the more perfect is its power*', this explicitly places the emphasis on the artwork to sufficiently disguise itself as a presentation of reality. The marginal response to this claim is that 'it is possible, that the mind during the representation of a tragedy may have its fits of forgetfulness ~~that it~~ & deception and believe the fiction to be the reality, but the moment you suppose it in a condition to make a choice of this kind, all sense of delusion vanishes.'²⁵ Whilst granting that delusion cannot be ruled out as a psychological possibility, such instances ought to be thought of as idiosyncratic exceptions rather than general illustrations of the mental state of audiences. The reasoning offered to support this claim is curious, as it doesn't immediately seem to address the theory of delusion on its own terms. The argument effectively states that if one supposes that the mental state appropriate to theatre involves a subjective choice then it cannot be a delusion. Emphasis on the will is a constant throughout Coleridge's thinking on this topic, being evident in the previous formulation of the 'temporary faith... which we encourage by our own Will' and reemerging in *Biographia*'s stipulation that the suspension of disbelief be a 'willing' one. Whilst the claim that one cannot choose to be deluded seems to follow more or less from any standard definition of the term, one might think that presenting this as a challenge to Knight begs the question against his position. In order to understand why this is not necessarily the case, it is useful to compare this to the critique of Hartley examined in the first chapter. There, Coleridge sets out his case for the mind's activity by aiming to show how Hartley's associationism conflicts with the nature of subjective experience. By arguing that consciousness itself possesses a level of coherence and unity that associationism cannot account for, an important phenomenological element featured in Coleridge's strategy. A variant of this strategy is also brought, whether by Wordsworth or Coleridge, against Knight, since here argument likewise relies on a particular interpretation of the phenomenology, effectively charging the delusive account with an ignorance of the viewer's mental state rather than any logical failing.

²⁴ Edna Shearer and Julian Lindsay have argued that the annotations were dictated by Coleridge on the grounds that Wordsworth seldom made sustained marginal annotation of this sort ('Wordsworth and Coleridge Marginalia in a Copy of Richard Payne Knight's "Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste"' *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 1.1 (1937), 63-99).

²⁵ *Marginalia* III, p.404.

As well as offering a critique of Knight's theory of delusion, other annotations of the *Analytical Inquiry* also contain sections that offer the suggestion of a competing phenomenological account. An example of this is when it is argued that 'we *know* the thing to be a ~~dee~~ representation, but we often *feel* it to be a reality'.²⁶ The previous emphasis on choice remains important here, since otherwise this decoupling of knowledge and feeling would simply resemble a state of confused dissonance. If choice remains a pre-requisite, however, this implies that, rather than being pushed into a contradictory state of mind, the subject elects to preserve this peculiar asymmetry for a specific purpose. Burwick observes another version of this bifurcation of purposes when he notes how 'those who argue for the *voluntary* nature of [dramatic] illusion... savour the simultaneous modes of response: *aesthetic immediacy*... together with *aesthetic distance*'.²⁷ In contrast to the theory of delusion, where feeling and knowledge would presumably need to work in tandem to produce a convincing simulation of reality, having them work towards different ends creates a much more nuanced dynamic. This dynamic would rely on a similar assumption to that which underpins the Husserlian *epoché*, namely that performing a suspension leaves the experience itself unaffected whilst still being able to neutralise the doxastic relation one has towards it.²⁸ In both cases, the process of suspension does not obscure or discard the relation of knowledge, but temporarily prevents it from influencing the feeling of the accompanying experience. The knowledge 'is still there, like the parenthesized in the parentheses... *but we make "no use" of it*, and this is not understood, naturally, as implying that we are deprived of it'.²⁹ On the contrary, it is vital in both the case of the theatregoer and the phenomenologist that they remain cognisant of the suspension they are performing, as it is precisely this cognisance that allows the unusual decoupling of belief and experience to be successfully sustained without falling into delusion or scepticism. Whilst these prototypical instances of suspension remain on the level of intriguing observations at this stage, they nonetheless open up questions about the relations between belief, experience and reality that would go on to become central to Coleridge's subsequent systematic ambitions.

iv - Interest and Ideality in *The Principles of Genial Criticism*

²⁶ *Marginalia* III, p.406.

²⁷ Burwick, *Mimesis*, p.2.

²⁸ Burwick cites Husserl as one of the twentieth-century successors to the Enlightenment and Romantic theories he examines (*Ibid.*, p.11).

²⁹ *Ideas*, p.64.

Appearing a few years after his first series of lectures on drama, *The Principles of Genial Criticism* marks the expansion of Coleridge's interest in artistic judgement into a more technical, philosophical register. In doing so, it acts as an important steppingstone to the *Biographia*'s attempt at integrating a theory of judgement into a fully-fledged system of transcendental philosophy. Whilst there is no explicit mention of suspension in the *Principles*, its engagement with similar questions about the phenomenology of artistic reception contains numerous formulations where the concept remains implicit. Here, however, the characterisation of this reception appears within the context of a more normative question: how one *ought* to respond to works of art. Whilst this normative element is arguably also operative within the *Lectures*, the move into a more general analysis of critical principles emphasises a disposition that one undertakes not only to engage with a given work, but also to evaluate and communicate its aesthetic status. In order to defend the idea that there is such a way that one ought to judge artworks, Coleridge sets out to contest the claim that such judgements are merely the result of contingent and idiosyncratic associations, another position defended by Knight in the *Analytic Inquiry*. In response to this deflationary psychologistic framework, Coleridge draws on Kantian terminology from *The Critique of Judgement* to argue that the diversity and relativity of tastes applies only to the 'agreeable' whilst the 'beautiful' retains the potential for a universal standard. However, he moves away from Kant significantly when he identifies beauty with the ideal relations of 'multēity' and 'unity', reacting against what Michael Kooy frames as Kant's 'reductively subjective bias'.³⁰ This complicated combination of adherence and divergence creates a philosophical context wherein suspension is able to reemerge as a state of mind calibrated to prevent the empirical from distorting the intellectual in judgements of beauty.

The main aim of Coleridge's first essay in the *Principles* is to clarify his position that poetry is essentially characterised by the production of pleasure as opposed to the acquisition of truth. Whilst it is important that poetry possesses an affective and ameliorative element to distinguish it from works of science, he is nonetheless keen to retain its connection to the intellect over the senses, arguing that '[t]he common essence of all [types of poetry] consists in the excitement of emotion for the immediate purpose of pleasure thro' the medium of beauty'.³¹ The key clause here is the final one, stipulating that the beauty must produce the pleasure, not the other way around. Coleridge

³⁰ Michael Kooy Coleridge, *Schiller and Aesthetic Education* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p.100. Emphasising the continuity with Schiller's thought, Kooy's interest in the limitations of Kantian aesthetics is more focused on the capacity to the aesthetic to possess a moral or social dimension rather than an epistemological or phenomenological one, although the route he takes to get to this conclusion shares much with the argument being made here.

³¹ *SW&FI*, p.358.

qualifies that whilst he retains the term ‘pleasure’ for its emotional connotations, his preferred term for describing the intellectual element of the judgement would be ‘complacency’.³² This ambiguous descriptor is introduced with little further commentary, but it is reasonable to assume that it is not meant in the standard pejorative sense of being blithe or inattentive. Setting aside these connotations, complacency might be understood as taking something for granted without actively confirming it. Understood in this sense, it is certainly plausible to understand complacency as a variant of suspension, which is specifically an act of not attending to or refraining from actively affirming something.

A philosophical analogue to ‘complacency’ would be the Kantian notions of interest and disinterest³³, which play an integral role in the *Critique of Judgement*. For Kant, interest is defined as ‘the liking we connect with the presentation of an object’s existence’³⁴, meaning that a judgement characterised by disinterest would be devoid of any such ontological considerations. In his gloss on the Kantian distinction between the ‘agreeable’ and the ‘beautiful’ Coleridge uses a number of formulations which, even if they do not explicitly mention disinterest, clearly rely on the concept, enabling him to give an account of aesthetic judgement that is independent from the artwork’s status as a physical, and by extension causative, object. This stimulatory dynamic instead is assigned to the concept of the agreeable, which is described as involving ‘a pre-established harmony between the organs and their appointed objects’.³⁵ Coleridge echoes Kant when he describes how ‘[w]hen we find an object agreeable, the *sensation* of pleasure always precedes the judgement, and is its determining cause’³⁶, identifying an objective causal relation as the source of the judgement which requires the object’s real existence as a necessary precondition. In the case of judging something to be beautiful, by contrast, ‘the contemplation or intuition of its beauty precedes the *feeling*’³⁷, distancing it from any psychophysiological causality. This later becomes explicit when, again following Kant, Coleridge distinguishes the beautiful from the agreeable and the good on the grounds that the latter judgements ‘excite a desire for the actual existence of the image or idea contemplated’ whereas the former ‘rests gratified in the mere contemplation or intuition, regardless

³² *SW&F I*, p.362.

³³ Wellek (p.112) claims that ‘complacency’ is ‘obviously a rendering of the German “Wohlgefallen”’, rendered in modern editions simply as ‘liking’, but this ignores the specific cognitive implication that Coleridge is evidently trying to communicate by emphasising only the pleasurable element.

³⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. Werner Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), p. 45.

³⁵ *SW&F I*, p.370.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.380.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

whether it be a fictitious Apollo, or a real Antonius'.³⁸ Whilst this pairing makes it clear that beauty and reality are not mutually exclusive, it is equally apparent that judging a thing to be beautiful takes place without taking any stance on its real existence.

Despite Coleridge's generally consistent adherence to Kantian argument in the *Principles*, a notable exception to this is his decision to define beauty as 'Multēity in Unity'³⁹ rather than following Kant's account of a 'formal purposiveness in the play of the subject's cognitive powers'.⁴⁰ The reason this is so significant is that it contravenes Kant's strict insistence that a judgement of beauty must not be dependent upon any concept. Once a concept is introduced, according to Kant, 'the consciousness of this relation [between the concept and the object] would be intellectual... and hence would not be a judgement of taste'.⁴¹ For Kant, identifying beauty with concepts like multēity and unity gives too strong a role to the determinate cognition of the object through the understanding, thus implicitly reintroducing an interest in the object's existence. Given that Coleridge is similarly committed to judgements of taste being devoid of interest, his definition of beauty seems to be at risk of a logical contradiction. If, however, one considers Coleridge's position in relation to his views on suspension, a possible solution to this contradiction presents itself. Kant's position relies on the assumption that if the understanding cognises the object under a determinate concept this must reintroduce the element of interest; what this ignores, however, is the possibility that this interest might then be bracketed in order that the pure concept be considered independently from the cognised object. This sort of process is even suggested in Coleridge's example of an old coach wheel 'disfigured with dirt and tar' which can still be said to retain an element of beauty provided: 'I turn away my attention from these, and regard the *Figure* abstractly'.⁴² Rather than focusing on the wheel's existence as a material object, the subject is instead able to view it as an instance of an ideal figure which whilst it is realised in the object is not in any way reliant upon it. This constitutes an example what Kooy describes as Coleridge's attempt to 'extend the domain of aesthetic experience... in order to say something objective'⁴³, in the sense that it connects to something that exists beyond the confines of the subject's internal consciousness.

³⁸ *SW&F I*, p.370.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.372.

⁴⁰ *Critique of Judgement*, p.68.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* p.63.

⁴² *SW&F I*, p.372.

⁴³ Kooy, *Aesthetic Education*, p.105.

An important consequence of Coleridge's divergence from the Kantian account of beauty is that it leaves open the possibility for aesthetic judgements to refer to an object, albeit one which is ideal rather than real, invoking what Vigus calls a 'constitutive idea of objective beauty'⁴⁴. Thus, whilst his declaration that '[t]he BEAUTIFUL arises from the perceived harmony of an object, whether sight or sound, with the inborn and constitutive rules of the judgement and imagination' seems initially like a rephrasing of Kant's 'facilitated play of the two mental powers (imagination and understanding) quickened by their reciprocal harmony'⁴⁵, the inclusion of determinate concepts in Coleridge's account of aesthetic judgement opens up a more phenomenological interpretation of this claim. Rather than the judgement of beauty pleurably acquiescing in general cognition, Coleridge's account presents the possibility that it might be able to identify specific cognitions as instances of essential mental laws. This is further supported by his insistence that beauty 'is always intuitive'⁴⁶, a term which he defines earlier on in the *Principles* as 'a direct and immediate beholding or presentation of an object to the mind thro' the senses or the imagination'.⁴⁷ Whilst sensible intuition is still prohibited by Coleridge's commitment to aesthetic disinterest, imaginative intuition, which he frequently connects with geometrical truths, remains a possibility. Returning to the previous example of the wheel, the 'object' of intuition in this case would be the ideal figure rather than the material wheel. This ability to suspend empirical intuition and engage only with the ideal is central to Husserl's project of pure phenomenology, which utilises the *epoché* to ensure that the presentations of consciousness are intuited as instantiations of essences rather than factual particulars. In light of this, the relationship that Coleridge outlines between the subject and 'the inborn and constitutive rules of the judgement and imagination' seems much closer to an account of phenomenological eidetic intuition. Viewed this way, the artwork becomes the focal point for an ideal apprehension of the mind's acts of unification, rather than Kant's subjectivist play of faculties which can only ever manifest as a sense of general cognition.

Around the time of the writing of the *Principles*, Coleridge's correspondence with *Courier* editor, Daniel Stuart, provides further evidence of a move towards this more phenomenological view of consciousness. Here he remarks that '[i]mages and Thoughts possess a power in and of themselves, independent of that act of Judgement or Understanding by which we affirm or deny the existence of

⁴⁴ Vigus, *Platonic Coleridge*, p.52.

⁴⁵ *Critique of Judgement*, p.63.

⁴⁶ *SW&F I*, p.372.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.369.

a reality correspondent to them'.⁴⁸ This statement exhibits a different form of Husserlian epoché's central tenet, that one can extricate the immanent givenness of consciousness from any belief about its ontological foundation. This position is reiterated in the later formulation of the suspension of disbelief, where images are tasked with 'work[ing] by their own force'.⁴⁹ In addition, Coleridge's identification of an 'act of judgement' with the sense of reality parallels the Husserlian presentation of the natural attitude, framing objectivity as something which is conferred by subjective belief and can in principle be withheld. By withholding this act of objectifying judgement, one is left with the image itself as what Husserl would term a 'phenomenological residuum'⁵⁰ ready to be analysed without the imposition of the natural attitude. However, just as Husserl stipulates the need for the supplementary eidetic reduction to scientifically fix the investigation of this residuum, so Coleridge is keen to evaluate the images of consciousness in terms of the ideal rules that govern them. Returning to the *Principles*, this is exemplified in the definition of taste as 'the intermediate faculty which connects the active with the passive powers of our nature, the intellect with the senses'.⁵¹ The function of taste is thus primarily synthetic, as it is said to 'elevate the *images*' of the senses while it 'realises the *ideas*' of the intellect.⁵² The intuition of the ideal is thus not to be thought of as an act of abstracting away from images, but as a way of allowing them their philosophical significance. This account is mirrored in a fragment that appears around the same time as the *Principles* entitled *On Aesthetic Problems*⁵³ which approaches the same theme in relation to the role of the artist. Here, Coleridge states that if the artist is to produce the 'appropriate image' their mind 'must be excitable & thrown into that state, by the *Idea* (N.b. not the Spectrum or Phantom but the *Idea*)'.⁵⁴ Both instances describe an intentional object that is a fusion of image and idea, but with the emphasis firmly on identifying the ideal from within this fusion. On this conception, artistic production and reception require the same disposition as Husserl sets out for the phenomenologist, whereby the images of experience are understood in relation to a realm of ideality which transcendently determines their modes of appearance. This is reiterated in a later notebook entry of 1818, where Coleridge declares that the artist must first *eloign*⁵⁵ himself from Nature in order to return to her

⁴⁸ *CL* IV, p.641.

⁴⁹ *BL* II, p.134.

⁵⁰ *Ideas*, p.61.

⁵¹ *SW&F* I, p.365.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Editorial estimates date this fragment to somewhere between 1813-15.

⁵⁴ *SW&F* I, p.348.

⁵⁵ OED gives 'eloign' as 'To take oneself off, abscond; to retire to a distance, seclude oneself (from)', and gives this very section from Coleridge as an instance. ("eloin | eloign, v.". OED Online. July 2018. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/60570?redirectedFrom=eloign> (accessed September 13, 2018).

with full effect... he must out of his own mind create forms according to the several Laws of the Intellect... Not to acquire cold notions, lifeless technical Rules, but living and life-producing Ideas.’⁵⁶ If, therefore, the critic is supposed to latch on to the particular ideas that the artist has made the object of their work, it follows that their own engagement with the work ought to contain a counterpart to this process of ‘eloigning’.

v - The willing suspension of disbelief as a phenomenology of criticism

The main phenomenological development that the *Principles* makes in relation to the themes of suspension in the *Lectures* is to outline a distinct experience of artistic criticism concerned with identifying aesthetic value. This development is important for examining the most well-known manifestation of this theme in *Biographia*, as it offers a way of contextualising the willing suspension of disbelief in relation to the stated aims of the text. Since its assimilation into critical discourse, Coleridge’s formulation has often been taken as a description of engaging with fictions *per se*, and has been both defended and critiqued on these grounds.⁵⁷ Understood in these terms, the ‘poetic faith’ of the *Biographia* would effectively be a restatement of the ‘half-faith’⁵⁸ of the lectures, with literature taking the place of drama as the relevant aesthetic medium. If one factors in the *Principles* as an intermediate stage in the evolution of the concept, however, another avenue of interpretation presents itself whereby poetic faith can instead be read as a phenomenology of poetic critique specially tailored to the transcendental philosophy of *Biographia* I.

One major textual reason for interpreting poetic faith in this more specific sense as a phenomenology of criticism comes from Coleridge’s acerbic remarks reacting against subscribers to circulating libraries. Here he states that ‘I dare not compliment their *pass-time*, or rather *kill-time*, with the name of *reading*’.⁵⁹ The grounds offered for this dismissive attitude are that a culture of literature modelled on consumption and amusement produces ‘a sort of beggarly daydreaming’ in which ‘the whole *materiel* and imagery... is supplied *ab extra* by a sort of mental *camera obscura*

⁵⁶ CN IV, 4297.

⁵⁷ Elisa Galgut defends this version of Coleridge’s suspension (‘Poetic faith and prosaic concerns. A defense of “suspension of disbelief”’ *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 21:3 (2002), 190-199) against objections from Noël Carroll (*The Philosophy of Horror*, London: Routledge 1990) and Kendall Walton (*Mimesis as Make-Believe*, London: Harvard University Press, 1990). See also Joseph Bensman and Robert Lilienfeld, ‘A Phenomenological Model of the Artistic and Critical Attitudes’ *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 28. 3 (1968), 353-367.

⁵⁸ LL I, p.134.

⁵⁹ BL I, p.48*.

manufactured at the printing office'.⁶⁰ Rather than willingly adopting a position of suspended disbelief, the reading public are instead painted as surrendering to a mechanical relation with a material, commercial object which 'reflects and transmits the moving phantasms of one man's delirium[,] so as to people the barrenness an hundred other brains afflicted with the same trance or suspension of all common sense and definite purpose'.⁶¹ Whilst still being described in terms of a suspension, reading merely for leisure is presented as an inversion of all the key elements of suspended disbelief, being externally stimulated in a passive fashion and characterised not by the pursuit of an idea imbued into an image by an act of genius, but a phantasm spun out of delirium. These damning appraisals strongly suggest that Coleridge is not offering the suspension of disbelief as an account of the way audiences actually engage with literature. As such, the account of suspension offered in *Biographia* ought to be thought of as a prescription as much as a description, promoting a specific type of readerly experience: a philosophically critical one. This is where integrating the position of the *Principles* into the genealogy of suspension becomes especially useful, as it demonstrates the emergence of this more normative element as well as the concern for ideality. Rather than trying to outline a universal experience of reading, Coleridge can instead be understood as providing a phenomenological model for how one ought to try and experience a text if, like him, one is concerned with evaluating it on philosophical grounds.

The first mention of the suspension of disbelief in *Biographia* comes in chapter fourteen during the discussion of the supernatural in the *Lyrical Ballads*, where it is presented as 'that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith'.⁶² Whilst this is the formulation that has become best known, it leaves out the two pre-requisites that Coleridge presents as necessary in order to bring this poetic faith about. The first of these is the 'transfer from our inward nature [of] a human interest',⁶³ invoking the realm of first-person experience founded in the 'I AM' principle of transcendental self-consciousness. In his lectures on European literature given a year later, Coleridge reaffirms this connection when he states that '[p]oetry... is purely *human*—all its materials are *from* the mind, and all the products are *for* the mind'.⁶⁴ The task of the critic is thus not only an apprehension of the experiences being described, but also an assessment of how these

⁶⁰ *BL* I, p.48*.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* For more on *Biographia*'s antagonistic relationship to the commercial press cf. Robert Maniquis 'Poetry and Barrel-Organs: The Text in the Book of the *Biographia Literaria*' in Burwick (ed.) (1989), pp.255-268.

⁶² *BL* II, p.6.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *LL* II, p.218.

correlate to the transcendental features of experience in order to establish an interest which is neither partial nor conditional but universally human. The second condition is given as ‘the semblance of truth sufficient to procure [poetic faith] for these shadows of imagination’⁶⁵, which must to be understood in relation to the specific genre under discussion in this instance, that of the supernatural. Given that this is a genre which intentionally eschews accurate depictions of reality, the status of ‘truth’ in this context becomes complicated. This can also be seen in *On Aesthetic Problems* when Coleridge addresses ‘[t]he instinct & need of Art to supply the *realism* <i.e. Life & Mind> of Nature in the Language itself’, and poses the question of ‘how this is effected?’⁶⁶. The primary answer given to this question is ‘by coincidence <of certain outward forms> with the inherent constitutive forms of the Human Mind’⁶⁷; this offers a way of understanding the ‘semblance of truth’ called for in *Biographia* which shifts the representational stakes away from truthful depiction and towards the critical examination of consciousness. The same principle is succinctly stated in Percy Shelley’s claim that the supernatural element in *Frankenstein* ‘affords a point of view to the imagination for the delineating of human passions more comprehensive and commanding than any which the ordinary relations of existing events could yield’.⁶⁸ Taking these two conditions together, the suspension of disbelief, particularly in conjunction with the supernatural, emerges as a mode of thought specifically structured to prepare the critic for a mode of interpretation based on its ability to convey universal features of human subjectivity.

Having introduced poetic faith in cursory fashion, it is not until chapter twenty-two of *Biographia*, midway through the critical appraisal of Wordsworth, that Coleridge reintroduces and develops the notion. This section builds upon the previous remarks about the supernatural by arguing that an excessive ‘*matter-of-factness*’⁶⁹, far from enhancing the reader’s immersion, actually holds back their ability to engage aesthetically. Returning to the rubric of the *Lectures*, Coleridge refers here to ‘that *illusion*, contradistinguished from *delusion*, that *negative faith*’ which is ‘rendered impossible’⁷⁰ by the presence of too many overly factual descriptions and biographical details. This effectively reframes the position put forward in the *Lectures* that the artwork is not responsible for compelling its audience into a believing response. Here, however, Coleridge takes the argument a

⁶⁵ *BL II*, p.6.

⁶⁶ *SW&F I*, p.347.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, ed. Maurice Hindle (London: Penguin, 2003), p.9.

⁶⁹ *BL II*, p.126.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.134.

step further by claiming that the attempt to inspire belief is not only ‘superfluous’ but that it contravenes ‘the essence of poetry’.⁷¹ Whereas before delusive belief in fictional events was granted as an innocuous, if exceptional, possibility, here it is overtly proscribed as an impediment to proper engagement. The reason given for this is that negative faith is supposed to let ‘the images presented... work by their own force, without either denial or affirmation of their real existence’,⁷² engendering what Catherine Gallagher describes as a state of ‘ontological indifference’.⁷³ In Husserlian terms, negative faith corresponds to the suspension of the natural attitude, freeing the images of consciousness from any referential relation with the objective world. By showing how the ‘baffled attempts of the author to *make* him [the reader] believe’ can be every bit as disruptive to a poem’s functioning as a failure to withhold a *disbelieving* response, Coleridge demonstrates an acute awareness, which he shares with Husserl, of suspension’s unique status as a neutral doxastic relation which orients philosophical reflection away from the real and towards the ideal.

A final mention of poetic faith occurs near the end of *Biographia* II, in the critique of Charles Maturin’s drama *Bertram*. Discussing dramatic personae, Coleridge argues that the power of figures like Don Juan and Milton’s Satan is exemplary of a tacit accord between poet and reader that the latter will grant ‘that sort of negative faith in the existence of such a being, which we willingly give to productions *professedly ideal*’.⁷⁴ The suggestion that poetic faith ought to be proffered in response to ideality connects back to the position outlined in the *Principles*, and is even expanded upon with the same example of the Apollo Belvedere as an example of how this might manifest in another medium. This characterisation provides further evidence that Coleridge sees poetic faith not as something meant simply to facilitate fictional immersion, but rather to elevate the reader to the appropriate level of critical discernment. It is then explained that the ideal ‘consists in the happy balance of the generic with the individual’, presenting another form of the synthesis between ideas and images which appeared in the account of taste. Just as the idea without the image cannot be represented in an artistic medium, so the generic must still be realised through the focal point of an individual, since ‘nothing *lives* or is *real*, but as a definite and individual’.⁷⁵ Without this balance, the presentation either becomes too factual and suffers the problems identified in Wordsworth, or becomes too ideal and is reduced to a lifeless technical abstraction. Coleridge summarises this

⁷¹ *BL* II, p.134.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Gallagher, ‘The Rise of Fictionality’, p.349.

⁷⁴ *BL* II, p.214.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.215.

balance with the Latin phrase '*Forma formans per formam formatum translucens*'⁷⁶ - the forming form shining through the formed form, reaffirming once again that his conception of philosophical critique relies just as much on immanence as it does on transcendence. This productive polarity is also at the heart of Husserl's account of eidetic intuition, where he stresses that 'no essential intuition is possible without the free possibility of directing one's glance to an individual *counterpart* ... just as contrariwise no individual intuition is possible without the free possibility of carrying out an act of ideation'.⁷⁷ This interdependency between the individual and the universal constitutes one of the most important principles of eidetic phenomenology, as it is what allows experience, in spite of all its flux and contingency, to retain the promise of becoming an index of secure philosophical truths. By framing poetic faith as a disposition that is proffered in support of this aspiration, Coleridge grants it an implicit importance within the workings of his wider philosophical system in *Biographia*.

vi - The *Logic* and suspension as 'negative idealism'

As well as forming an important part of Coleridge's aesthetics and hermeneutics in the 1810s, suspension also plays a more conventionally philosophical role in the drafts of his unpublished *Logic*. Like the *Principles*, the *Logic* draws extensively on Kantian thought, and is in many ways a pedagogical primer for the transcendental system of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.⁷⁸ What makes the *Logic* interesting in this regard is that in blending together philosophy and pedagogy it displays a keen attention towards the precise mental state of its reader, the presumed student.⁷⁹ This didactic element brings with it numerous stipulations about the mindset that ought to be adopted for studying logic as a discipline, presenting a prominent example of suspension operating in a non-aesthetic context. In setting out the aims of the *Logic*, Coleridge bemoans the lack of specificity in works such as Isaac Watts' *Logick; or the Right Use of Reason in the Enquiry after Truth* (1725), where 'the essentials of common logic... are to be found, but so blended with metaphysics, theology, psychology, grammar'.⁸⁰ In order to avoid falling into this heterogeneous blend of subject areas, Coleridge poses the question: '[i]n what state do we suppose or require the mind of the

⁷⁶ BL II, p.215.

⁷⁷ *Ideas*, p.13.

⁷⁸ Wellek argues that the *Logic* 'is permeated with Kant's thought from the beginning to the end' (*Immanuel Kant in England*, p.116). In a broad sense this is correct, but, as with much of Wellek's analysis, the assumption that Coleridge is simply a derivative pseudo-Kantian obscures a number of elements that have no equivalent in Kant.

⁷⁹ Cf. Alice Snyder, *Coleridge on Logic and Learning* (New Haven: Oxford University Press, 1929).

⁸⁰ *Logic*, p.6.

individual to be to whom these rules [of logic] are to be presented?’⁸¹, with the aim being to isolate and focus exclusively on this state. Combined with Coleridge’s Kantian conception of logic as a transcendental analysis of the forms of judgement, this state of mind becomes defined along many of the same lines as the critical disposition outlined in *Biographia*. Far from being a coincidence, these parallels demonstrate how, just as the poet must ‘be implicate if not explicate a great metaphysician’, the critic likewise operates on the same formal principles as the logician.

There is a sense in which, unusually for Coleridge, the attempt to identify and extricate the optimal logical state of mind is informed by a Kantian epistemic humility about the applicability of concepts. In his own philosophy, Coleridge makes the same move as many other post-Kantians in eschewing this restrictive epistemology in order to try and revitalise a substantive metaphysics; here, however, he argues provisionally for retaining these limitations in order to ensure the clear communication of logical principles. Reflecting on the Pythagorean effort to make man the measure of all things, Coleridge notes how:

The mind was now considered an island, unapproachable from without, or whatever importations were thrown on its shores from the unknown region were carefully distinguished from the indigenous growth.⁸²

The same image of the mind as an island is also found in Kant at the outset of a discussion on the distinction between phenomena and noumena. Here, the ‘land of pure understanding’ is described as ‘an island... enclosed in unalterable boundaries by nature itself’⁸³, delimiting any attempt to infer a demonstrable connection between the previously deduced categories and the world as it is in itself. Yet whereas in Kant these limitations arise as a result of being unable to forge any secure connection between concepts and things-in-themselves, for Coleridge they are merely employed to keep the focus of the reader fixed solely on the activity of their own mind. The investigations of the *Logic* are thus limited to ‘mental processes wholly abstracted from all outward realities, and ... without with reference to any supposed passive impression’.⁸⁴

⁸¹ *Logic*, p.7.

⁸² *Logic*, p.41.

⁸³ *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.339.

⁸⁴ *Logic*, p.75.

An important feature of the state of mind that Coleridge seeks to outline for logical thought is that it is provisional, only being adopted for as long as one is engaged in trying to understand the relevant principles. This connects to one of key elements of both dramatic illusion and poetic faith, both of which are likewise adopted for a specific purpose and in the knowledge and that they will eventually be set aside in the return to ordinary consciousness. In being premised on their own impermanence in this manner, these dispositions open up different avenues of thought without having to be set at odds with the standards of common sense. This is no less the case in the *Logic*, where the fact that Coleridge is arguing for a provisional disposition as a pedagogical aid allows him to articulate a position that moves well beyond Kant's careful economy of justification. Whereas in the *Critique of Pure Reason* the relation between concepts and things-in-themselves is left an an unanswerable question beyond the ken of human thought, the *Logic's* provisional attitude does away with any such ambiguity and adopts a much stronger metaphysical position to prevent any deviation from the realm of subjectivity. As a result, the position ends up being much closer to the empirical idealism of Berkeley, entirely ruling out any material reality beyond perception, which Coleridge openly acknowledges when he writes that '[t]he logician, and in like manner the geometrician, will say "I am not a Berkeleyan, but while I am engaged in the science of logic I must reason as if I were"''.⁸⁵ As well as repeating the parallel with geometrical thought from the *Principles*, the description of this position as a 'negative idealism'⁸⁶ refers back to the *Biographia's* account of 'negative faith'. Here, Coleridge explains that 'negative' implies 'that...which abstracts from, without asserting the nonentity of, its opposite'⁸⁷, meaning in this instance that reference to an objective world is set aside without the need for a refutation of realism. The same applies to negative faith, where the factual falsehood of the poem or drama is not denied, but equally is not allowed to govern the way it is interpreted. The logician thus shares a common goal with the critic of poetry insofar as both adopt positions intended to neutralise certain forms of reasoning that might invalidate their desired object.

One of the ways in which the 'negative idealism' of the *Logic* differs from the 'negative faith' of *Biographia* is that it is exclusively limited to observing the pure activity of the mind, as opposed to artistic representations of a mind mediated through a work of art. As such, whereas the critic deals

⁸⁵ *Logic*, p.41 A modern philosophical parallel to this position is Jerry Fodor's 'methodological solipsism' which he advocates as a provisional disposition for cognitive science research. This position is placed in direct comparison to a Husserlian methodology in Dreyfus & Hall (eds.) (1982).

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ *Logic*, p.41.

second-hand with material provided originally by the activity of the artist, the logician must instead reflect directly upon their own thoughts. Additionally, the critic is beholden to the fact that if the poetry they are dealing with is stylistically effective it will, on Coleridge's account, possess the virtue of '*untranslatableness*'⁸⁸, a fact which fixes the poetic object strictly within the conditions of representation established by the poet's art. For the logician, on the other hand, the means by which they reflect upon their own mental activity are inconsequential as long as they furnish an adequate example of the relevant logical principle, granting a considerably greater degree of freedom to their reflections. This means that the logician is in many ways much closer than the critic to the position of the Husserlian phenomenologist, despite the fact that their negative idealism moves them further away from the neutrality of the epoché by totally negating the external world. This in turn allows for a comparison to an aspect of the Husserlian method which was not present in any of Coleridge's previous formations of suspension, that of a self-governing creativity which is able to supplement and enhance the way that the mind comprehends the nature of its own operations.

This creative element in Husserl is emphasised by Christian Lotz, who identifies imagination and play as essential to fully understanding the way Husserl understood phenomenology as an eidetic science.⁸⁹ This is not imagination in the Coleridgean sense previously identified with intentionality, but rather a translation of the German word 'Phantasie' closer to the ordinary understanding of imagination as the construction of an internal mental image which Coleridge relegates to the status of fancy. What makes the play of Phantasie so productive for phenomenology is the role it plays in exploring possibilities which differ from those given in actual lived experience. Just as fancy is 'emancipated from the order of space and time'⁹⁰, so Phantasie allows for a conscious perspective of things not granted by facticity. The reason this is important for phenomenology as an eidetic endeavour is that the identification of essences requires a mode of examination that removes all aspects of contingency from the object of study until all that remains is what necessarily adheres throughout all possibilities. The problem for phenomenology is that lived experience seldom, if ever, provides the opportunity for its various experiential modes to be worked through in this rigorous manner, as most of it involves experiencing only one of countless possible perspectives and meanings. Phantasie, by contrast, operates in an entirely different mode which is not tied to the

⁸⁸ BL II, p.142.

⁸⁹ Christian Lotz, *From Affectivity to Subjectivity: Husserl's Phenomenology Revisited* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), pp.9-10. The theme is also explored by Natalie Depraz, 'Imagination and Passivity. Husserl and Kant: A Cross-relationship' in *Alterity and Facticity: New Perspectives on Husserl*, ed. Natalie Depraz and Dan Zahavi (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), pp.29-56.

⁹⁰ BL I, p.305.

real flow of experience, enabling it to theoretically entertain any number of experiential possibilities. As Lotz explains, ‘while the production of real possibilities remains bound to the *actually remembered object*, in pure phantasy, what is quasi-presented... is an object I am conscious of as *absolutely possible*’.⁹¹ For the eidetic phenomenologist, this ability to enumerate the possibilities not supplied by lived experience is the key to apprehending any kind of experiential essence.

There are a number of sections within the *Logic* where Coleridge encourages the use of creativity and memory in an instructive register to provide illustrations of the mind’s activity. In introducing logic as the attempt to identify constitutive mental acts underpinning all forms of judgement, he acknowledges that ‘the unprepared imagination will at first find difficulty in mastering the conception of forms as acts’, which involves the ability to distinguish between ‘εἶδος [eidos] and εἰδωλον [eidolon]’ - essence and image.⁹² In order to make sure that the student attends to the idea and not the image, Coleridge prescribes ‘placing yourself in such situations, or as it were positions, of mind as would be likely to call up that act in our intellectual being and then attend to it as its necessarily transient and subtle nature will permit’.⁹³ One example that he gives of this is observing the patterns of light created by certain insects:

I have twice seen the ascent of the ephemerae in a strong moonlight, the beams passing through an opening in a branching tree that overhung the water on which the moonlight formed a small island in deepest shade, and here by intensely watching the phenomenon I satisfied myself that the different spiral figures were each produced by the image [of] motion which the single insect left on the eye; each of which overtook the preceding before the impression had ceased, on the same principle as boys produce the circle of light by a piece of kindled charcoal whirled rapidly round.

Whilst the encounter with the insects is drawn from memory in Coleridge’s case, by presenting it as an example for the reader’s consideration he is implicitly relying upon their ability to imagine the same event and reflect upon the mental acts involved. This imaginative element is then reinforced by Coleridge’s reminder that what is salient in these examples are the ‘mental processes wholly

⁹¹ Lotz, *From Affectivity to Subjectivity*, p.17.

⁹² *Logic* p.73.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

abstracted from all outward realities' by which one can 'consider the sense itself, or the faculty of original and constructive imagination, aloof from all sensation and without with reference to any supposed passive impression'.⁹⁴ In accordance with the negative idealism stipulated previously, any appeal to objectivity is ruled out so as to not obscure these constitutive features of subjectivity. This means that even if the student does rely on memory to supply examples, the requisite suspension of the causative object will end up transforming the experience into something practically indistinguishable from a construction of the fancy. Coleridge admits as much when he explains that, in comprehending a logical principle, 'it is altogether indifferent whether it be a matter of a waking perception, as the perception of a rainbow, or... the matter of a phantasm, "the stuff that dreams are made of"'.⁹⁵ Thus, whilst he might not extend the same philosophical respect to the fancy as Husserl does to *Phantasie*, Coleridge is nonetheless willing to grant it philosophical legitimacy once the influence of the external world has been neutralised.

One of the striking things that emerges from examining the way in which suspension operates within the *Logic* is how it presents an example of themes from Coleridge's literary theory intersecting with and arguably influencing his philosophy. By encouraging his reader to 'familiarise... truth experimentally'⁹⁶ under the conditions of negative idealism, the disciplines of logic and aesthetic criticism become unexpectedly united through a shared pursuit of identifying transcendental features of subjective experience. The significance of the relevant suspensions in either case is that, withholding considerations about the material world of objects, the mediums of fiction and fancy cease to be treated with suspicion and instead present themselves as new avenues for discovering philosophical truths. Thus, what begins as an attempt to capture the nature of dramatic engagement ends up gradually evolving into a means by which ideal, necessary laws of consciousness can become known. What this genealogy is intended to show is the extent to which these dauntingly abstract features of Coleridge's philosophy always retain a connection to something concrete, namely experience itself. One might even go further and argue that without the specific conditions of reflection that suspension makes possible, this realm of ideality, which would later become the basis for explicating Coleridge's central distinction between reason and understanding, would be little more than an empty postulate. By allowing the images of consciousness to operate beyond their capacity as perceptual presentations, and instead become

⁹⁴ *Logic*, p.75.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.77.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.263.

objects of immanent intuition, idea and image become capable of a mutual grounding in which both can support the other. Whilst the long afterlife of the willing suspension of disbelief may have entirely worn away these more metaphysical elements, by reconstructing the theoretical context within which the phrase was originally conceived one can begin to recapture some sense of its surprisingly far-reaching philosophical applications.

V - Incorporating Corporeality: Coleridge on Double Touch¹

i - Situating double touch

Up to this point, the trajectory of this study has focused on identifying the most prominent features of Coleridge's philosophical poetics emerging out of *Biographia*. The implicit logic of this framework has, in turn, influenced the types of phenomena being analysed. Since Coleridge grounds his poetics in the comprehension of the ideal, the topics discussed in the previous four chapters have correspondingly emphasised the ways that ideality manifests within experience, as well as how it then become implemented into poetic production and critique. There are, however, other elements operating within Coleridge's proto-phenomenology that this systematising outlook has left unexplored. So, for example, whilst the active, creative power outlined for imaginative intentionality assumes central importance in the constitution of experience, it is also inherently predicated upon an acknowledgement of the object's real existence independent of this process. Similarly, if the poetic imagination operates by balancing philosophical ideas and sensory images, it is very much a matter of perspective whether one views this as a idealisation of the image or a materialisation of the idea. Whilst imagination, ideality and activity constitute the centring, stabilising forces within Coleridge's philosophical system, they perform this function through their interaction with sensation, reality and passivity. These features deserve some attention so as to avoid misrepresenting Coleridge's outlook as simply another version of the orthodox idealism that he sought to move away from. A fruitful way to do this is through Coleridge's notion of 'double touch', which provides the opportunity to analyse the role of material embodiment in the shaping of conscious life. Understood this way, the term captures a proprioceptive awareness of one's body as a whole, which acts as a material nexus for the processes of sense-bestowal or *sinngebung* examined in chapter three. Additionally, this interpretation of double touch also allows for a discussion of Coleridge's views on the relationship between passive sensation and active practical volition, illustrating how his proto-phenomenological analyses operate at the intersection of his epistemological and ethical beliefs. Once this intersection has been sketched out, these ethical themes will then be continued into the final chapter examining the phenomenological roots of Coleridge's moral philosophy.

¹ This chapter is based in large part on 'Coleridge on Double Touch: A Phenomenological Analysis' *European Romantic Review*, 29.2, (2018), 213-27.

The term ‘double touch’ appears a number of times in Coleridge’s notebooks and letters, but only once within his published work.² This occurs at the end of *Biographia*’s twelfth chapter where in preparation for his account of the imagination, Coleridge provides a taxonomy of human faculties lifted from his contribution to Robert Southey’s *Omniana* (1812). Here, double touch appears as part of a threefold distinction between ‘will’, ‘choice’ and ‘the *sensation* of volition, ...[:]single and double touch’³, with no further commentary as to its meaning. Despite its fragmentary status, the intellectual landscape surrounding the concept has been mapped in a preliminary fashion by previous scholars.⁴ The most substantial critical treatment comes from John Beer, who variously identifies double touch with an extrapolation from scientific investigations of magnetism, a method of contact with deep sub-conscious mental forces and a maternally imbued awareness of exteriority pertinent to developmental psychology.⁵ Even with this collection of promising suggestions, however, Beer nonetheless concedes that the term has ‘never been satisfactorily explained’.⁶ This remark was made almost forty years ago, yet it still largely holds true. The attempt to understand double touch phenomenologically is not intended to offer a final word on this longstanding puzzle, nor to repudiate any of the possibilities explored by Beer, but rather to use them as helpful foils and prompts. The first of these, associated with magnetism, shows promise in tracing an intellectual genealogy, but given that almost all of Coleridge’s references orient double touch towards consciousness, it seems reasonable to assume that any connection to the material sciences is analogous at best.⁷ Discussion of magnetism also draws one into to neighbouring discourses of animal magnetism and mesmerism, which have their own established place within Coleridge scholarship.⁸ The second suggestion situates double touch within the well-covered context of Coleridge’s fascination with dreams, nightmares and subconscious mental activity, and is given consideration by Jennifer Ford. Whilst the approach taken here differs from Ford’s, attention will be

² Coleridge mentions the term once in an 1808 lecture (*LL* I, p.136). There is also a single use of the term in the unfinished *Opus Maximum*, (*OM*, p.30).

³ *BL* I, p.293.

⁴ Three of the most notable include John Beer, *Coleridge’s Poetic Intelligence*, (London, Palgrave, 1977), pp.81-88, and ‘A Stream by Glimpses: Coleridge’s Later Imagination’ in *Coleridge’s Variety*, ed J. Beer (London, Palgrave, 1974); Raimondo Modiano, ‘Coleridge’s Views on Touch and Other Senses’ *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities*, 81 (1978), 28-41; and Jennifer Ford, *Coleridge on Dreaming: Romanticism, Dreams and the Medical Imagination* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1998).

⁵ These first two appear in Beer, *Poetic Intelligence*, pp.81-88, the third in *Coleridge’s Variety*.

⁶ Beer, *Poetic Intelligence*, p.81.

⁷ Beer admits that the connection between the two is not immediately obvious in *Poetic Intelligence* (p.84).

⁸ As well as Beer (*Poetic Intelligence* and *Coleridge’s Variety*), Cf. Frederick Burwick, ‘Coleridge, Schelling and Animal Magnetism’ in *English and German Romanticism: Cross-Currents and Controversies*, ed. James Pipkin (Heidelberg, Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1985), and Eric Wilson, ‘Matter and Spirit in the Age of Animal Magnetism’ in *Philosophy and Literature*, 30.2 (2006), 329-345. There is also some discussion of this topic in Ford.

paid to the function that double touch plays in Coleridge's exploration of nightmares, which offers an illustrative context in which it becomes compromised. The third suggestion of double touch as a constitutive faculty related to the apprehension of objectivity is certainly the most fruitful for present purposes, as it locates the term firmly within the realm of subjectivity and lays the ground for a sketch of the functional role it might play in relation to other faculties.⁹

As well as broadening the scope of the phenomena under consideration, double touch also represents an opportunity to contrast Coleridge's work with different kinds of phenomenological analysis. Since many of the themes covered so far have operated within a classical model of subjectivity as conceptually distinct from material reality, the highly cognitivist analyses of Husserl have consistently provided the most productive analogue. However, now that affectivity and materiality are being brought to the forefront via double touch, the opportunity is presented to introduce the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who provides one of the most developed accounts of consciousness and embodiment within the phenomenological tradition. Whilst Merleau-Ponty's thought is heavily influenced by the Husserlian eidetic phenomenology utilised thus far, it is also significantly indebted to the methodological shift represented by Martin Heidegger. Dissatisfied with what he saw as the overly subjectivist focus of Husserl's phenomenology, Heidegger sought to challenge the centrality assigned to intentionality by emphasising how one's connection to the world is far more frequently mediated by automatic processes of acclimatised habit than by active, intellectual judgement.¹⁰ A central contention of this analysis was that human beings do not exist as detached subjects constantly set apart from objects, but as entities immersed within, and reliant upon, a world of which they themselves are a part. Heidegger's attempt to call a moratorium on what he saw as the misleading metaphysical framework of subjects as opposed to objects paves the way for Merleau-Ponty's argument that the ultimate nexus of the world's significance must be the material system through which one exists within it, i.e., the body. What stops Merleau-Ponty's account from collapsing into a straightforward physiology is the fact that he retains Husserl's emphasis on the contributions of consciousness, but re-contextualises its capacity to generate meaning through a constant acknowledgement that this process occurs under conditions of objective embodiment. Rather than subordinating his phenomenology to scientific accounts of the body

⁹ While the maternal and developmental elements no doubt represent an important detail in a full account of the concept, these will be provisionally set aside for the following chapter's examination of the parent/child dynamic in the *Opus Maximum*.

¹⁰ Cf. *Being and Time* §§14-24 'The Worldhood of the World'. For a discussion of Coleridge's own conception of habit cf. Andrea Timár, *Modern Coleridge: Cultivation, Addiction, Habits* (London: Palgrave, 2015).

provided by anatomy and biology, Merleau-Ponty aims to show that all the ‘mental’ or ‘subjective’ processes analysed by thinkers such as Husserl are fundamentally shaped and conditioned by corporeality. Since all engagements with the world necessarily occur within this context of material embodiment, Merleau-Ponty declares that ‘[e]xternal perception and the perception of one’s own body ... are the two facets of one and the same act’.¹¹

Whilst this more material outlook is useful for exploring the phenomenological possibilities for double touch, it would be remiss to introduce this comparison without acknowledging an important point of difference. The combined influences of a prolonged resistance to mechanistic materialism and a Christian conviction in the immortality of the human soul mean that this centralisation of the body cannot be neatly mapped onto Coleridge, who once noted that ‘[w]hether from acquired Habit or no, I [do] not, & seem to myself never to have [re]garded my Body as identical with [my]self’.¹² Whilst it is clear that he did pay close attention to philosophical questions about the status of the human body¹³, the subject that emerges from most of Coleridge’s work strikes one as exactly the kind of free-floating intelligence that Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty were reacting against. That being said, within the notion of double touch one nonetheless finds the rudiments of an account that acknowledges sensation and materiality as important components of epistemological and ethical life. Even if they ultimately disagree on the basic metaphysics of embodiment, the examples drawn from Merleau-Ponty’s writing can still serve to anchor Coleridge’s more scattered remarks.

ii - Uniting the Senses

A good place to begin is by contrasting double touch with the ordinary notion of touch as a sensory capacity for stimulation via physical-spatial contact. Coleridge’s interest in this sense of the term has been documented by Raimonda Modiano, who situates him within a broader late eighteenth-century discourse which sought to vindicate touch in reaction to its lowly position in neo-classical aesthetic hierarchies.¹⁴ A literal illustration of Coleridge’s thinking here is provided in an 1817 letter to C.A. Tulk which contains a pictorial diagram detailing how the senses relate to one

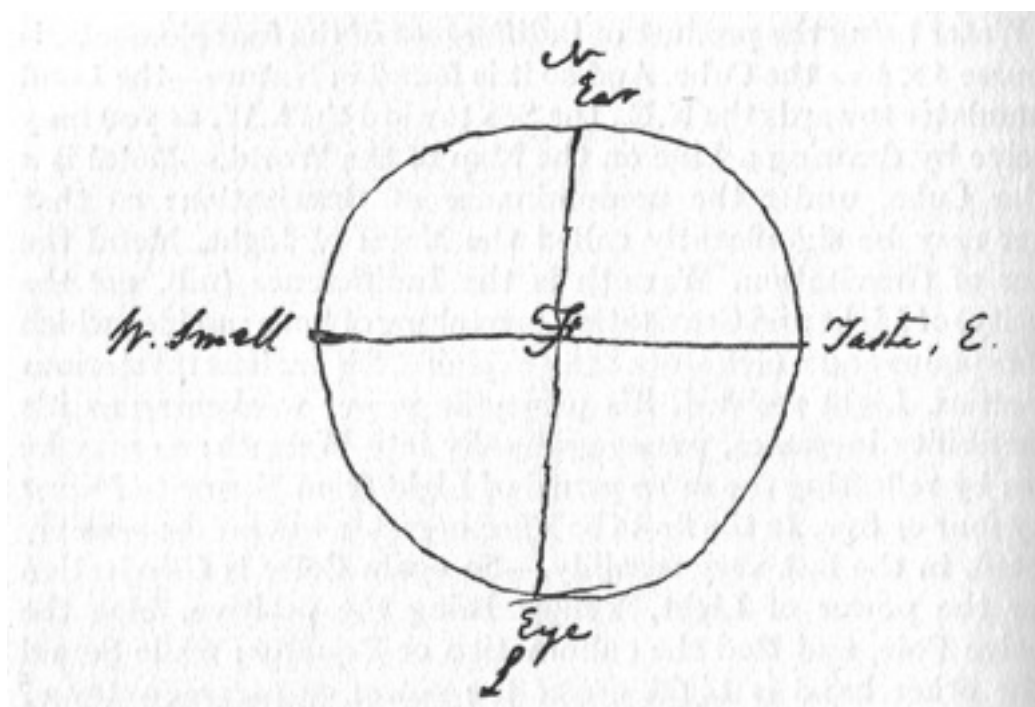
¹¹ *The Phenomenology of Perception*, p.237.

¹² *Marginalia* IV, p.461.

¹³ Cf. Neil Vickers *Coleridge and the Doctors* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004) and Alan Richardson’s chapter on Coleridge in *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹⁴ Modiano, ‘Coleridge’s Views on Touch and Other Senses’, pp.28-41.

another.¹⁵ This takes the form of a circle divided into four sections by two lines, with the cardinal points each given a different letter. Going clockwise, these letters designate sight, hearing, smell and taste, with a fifth letter at the central intersection marked 'F' for feeling.



This central point is where Coleridge locates touch, explaining that '[f]eeling organized in addition to and in co-existence with other senses is Touch'.¹⁶ This gives touch a higher status as a unifying nexus, a 'crossroad of all other senses'¹⁷ as Modiano puts it, analogous to Francis Bacon's *vestigia communia* of the senses, which Coleridge glosses in *Biographia* as 'the latency of all in each'.¹⁸ There are two related reasons behind Coleridge's decision to locate touch in the centre of his circular sensorium, one negative and one positive. The negative reason stems from Coleridge's antipathy towards the despotism of the eye, which results in visual experiences being considered paradigmatic for perception in general. In somewhat Hegelian fashion, Coleridge identifies a potent sense of disconnection created by this over-reliance on the visual, resulting in an irreducible alienation whereby the object is always apprehended at a distance from the subject. One of his more openly antagonistic descriptions of his wife Sara states that 'she creates her own self in a field of

¹⁵ CL IV, p.774.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Modiano, 'Coleridge's Views on Touch and Other Senses', p.33.

¹⁸ BL II, p.128.

Vision and Hearing, at a distance, by her own ears & eyes -& hence becomes the willing Slave of the Ears & Eyes of others', leading to 'an habitual absence of *reality* in her affections'.¹⁹ This leads to the positive point in favour of touch, which closes the gap created by sight and, as Modiano observes, manifests the most intimate connections between self and other.²⁰

Another characteristic of touch *qua* feeling is that it operates throughout the body and isn't necessarily bound to a given region, contributing to its unifying quality in relation to the other senses. As Coleridge puts it, this feeling 'is not a mere moment of sensation - but it is a blending & unifying of the sensations that inhere in the manifold goings of the Life of the whole man'.²¹ This is contrasted with the experiences of sight which refer only to 'some distinct separate, ~~visual~~ visible part of some other Body external to theirs'²², operating apart from the affective fusion of self and other made possible through touch. One might object that there are many instances that seem to operate in a similar manner; when one accidentally touches something very hot, there is a distinct awareness that this sensation is occurring in a very particular part of the body: the site of contact with the object. Far from contradicting Coleridge, however, this type of highly directed tactile experience seems a good fit for his accompanying notion of single touch. The reason such experiences might be thought of as 'single' is that their meanings tend solely towards the qualities of the object being touched — the main phenomenological feedback from touching a hot object is an inchoate form of the judgement: 'this object is hot'. This connection between affectivity and judgement will be explored in more detail below, but for now it is enough to merely highlight the object-oriented nature of single touch. If single touch is thus characterised by a directing of attention towards objective qualities, then double touch would occur when the meaning of the experience not only picks out these qualities, but also their interaction with the subject's own consciousness. Since subjectivity *tout court* is not reducible to any single mode of sensation, the meaning of this experience would be much closer to the kind of blending and unifying described by Coleridge. Double touch would thus not only reveal the quality of the object, but also the ongoing flow of subjective experiences that this quality is being integrated into in the moment of sensation.

¹⁹ *CNI*, 979.

²⁰ Modiano, 'Coleridge's Views on Touch and Other Senses', p.33.

²¹ *CNI*, 979.

²² *Ibid.*

Despite his characteristic attention to physiological minutiae, it is evident that Coleridge's conception of double touch goes far beyond its being just another conduit for empirical data. An indication of what this more prominent role might be is given in a couple of notebook entries from 1804. In the first of these, Coleridge refers to the skin as a 'Terra incognita in medicine', making the pun that metaphysicians 'are not even *skin-deep*'.²³ Failure to understand the nature of touch — to get skin-deep — evidently represents a *metaphysical* lacuna on Coleridge's view, not just a physical one. A further suggestion supporting this view occurs in the next entry: 'double Touch - the generation of the Sense of Reality and life out of us, from a certain Impersonation effected by a certain phantasm of double Touch'.²⁴ A quick note on the term 'phantasm' is needed here, as it has a strong bearing on how this passage is to be understood. Normally this term would denote something deceptive or illusory, which is difficult to reconcile with the substantive role that Coleridge is hinting at here. There is, however, another more philosophically technical sense of the term that fits much better with Coleridge's idiom: 'A mental image, appearance, or representation, considered as the immediate object of sense perception'.²⁵ Not only does this resolve the apparent contradiction of Coleridge presenting double touch as a mere illusion, it also supports the current phenomenological approach by situating the salient feature of double touch within immediate subjective experience. Similarly, the term 'impersonation' might seem to imply a falsehood or duplicity akin to mimicry, but a more congruous reading would suggest a sense of incarnating or embodying a subject's sense of personhood: an '*impersonation*'. Another claim being made for double touch here is its potential to safeguard the status of free will against necessitarianism. This comes through in the next part of the notebook entry where Coleridge outlines his 'hope of making out a radical distinction between this Volition [double touch] & Free Will or Arbitrement, and the detection of a Sophistry of the Necessitarians / as having arisen from confounding the two'.²⁶ This offers an insight into how Coleridge understands the necessitarian position, and by extension the role that double touch stands to play in opposing it. If this doctrine reduces the will to a framework of naturalistic causality, then insofar as it considers double touch at all it assumes that it is not meaningfully different, and can be treated in the same reductive manner. The crux of Coleridge's argument would therefore be that making this 'radical distinction' between double touch and free will offers a challenge to this

²³ *CNI*, 1826.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1827.

²⁵ "phantasm, n. and adj.". OED Online. March 2017. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/142182?redirectedFrom=phantasm> (accessed April 10, 2017). This sense is listed as now chiefly historical, but its period of usage extends to cover Coleridge's lifetime.

²⁶ *CNI*, 1827.

reduction. This strategy would aim to address the nature of human experience to which both he and his necessitarian opponent would, in theory, have common evidential access to through their own subjectivity. The question now stands as to how it might be conceptualised and unpacked in order to address this possibility. Modiano shows how Coleridge aimed to revitalise touch as an orchestrator of the other senses, yet her account stops short at the threshold of double touch *per se*. It is this transition from the general touch/feeling of the sensory diagram and towards metaphysical, anti-necessitarian double touch that represents the way into the higher level philosophical functions that would merit a place in *Biographia*'s taxonomy.

As with any argument that employs phenomenological premises, more is needed than simply giving a certain description of experience. This is where a second part of Coleridge's claims about double touch can be introduced, one which taps into his more transcendental mode, addressing conditions for the possibility of experience. The notebook entries clearly indicate that double touch is more than just a particular type of sensory experience. From a transcendental perspective, it is identified with synthetic unification on the level of both the affective senses and perceptual objectivity more generally. This 'generation of the Sense of Reality and life out of us', as Coleridge puts it, indicates that, far from being an esoteric supplement to other faculties, double touch participates in what Modiano calls 'the quest for a mode of consciousness and [a] philosophic concept which would accommodate both the self and the reality outside the self'.²⁷ An inversion of this claim appears in Coleridge's discussion of nightmare, which he describes as

a state not of Sleep but of Stupor of the outward organs of Sense... while the volitions of *Reason*, i.e. comparing &c, are awake, tho' disturbed... [which] transmits double Touch as single Touch: to which the Imagination therefore, the true inward Creatrix, instantly out of the chaos of the elements <or shattered fragments> of Memory puts together some form to fit it.²⁸

The implication here is that once touch loses its 'double' quality its reality-constituting power becomes jeopardised. This creates the connection between dreams, nightmares and a diminished sense of objective reality, comparable to the 'habitual absence of *reality*' resulting from over-reliance on vision. The dreamscape described in Coleridge's notebook entry offers another piece of

²⁷ Modiano, 'Coleridge's Views on Touch and Other Senses' p.39.

²⁸ CN III, 4046.

evidence about the nature of double touch, as it describes a negative conceptual space where double touch is absent from the experience whilst reason, imagination and memory remain in an active, albeit embattled, state.

Working with a broad swathe of Coleridgean accounts, Jennifer Ford observes how those that deal with nightmares often involve unpleasant tactile experiences such as biting, grabbing and otherwise being physically accosted.²⁹ Aside from these being simply reports of physical discomfort, Ford perceptively picks up on another common feature which she describes as ‘the destruction and extreme internal dislocation of the ‘I’’.³⁰ This connects to Ford’s wider methodological decision to differentiate between two separate figures: Coleridge and ‘dream-Coleridge’; between the historical figure and the compromised protagonist of the dreams.³¹ It is specifically ‘dream-Coleridge’ who suffers this barrage of aggressive sensations, rather than the writer that records them after the fact. This leads to the curious conclusion that Coleridge experienced his dreams as the vicarious sensory episodes of an unstable alter-ego removed from his waking self. This fits neatly with the observations made by Modiano about how authentic touch functions as a unifier of the sensorium, and provides an important clarification about the category of single touch. Rather than sitting centrally and dynamically incorporating the disparate inputs of sight, hearing, smell and taste, when touch becomes single it is forced to the circumference like any other sense. In contrast to Coleridge’s claim that true touch imbued with feeling is ‘not a mere moment of sensation’, in the case of nightmares this is exactly what it is, explaining how the individual tactile sensations can still occur without the usual ‘blending & unifying’. This in turn leads to ‘the chaos of elements’ described above, for which the beleaguered powers of reason and imagination must try to provide a surrogate unity in the absence of double touch. This phrase is reminiscent of the ‘phantasmal chaos of association’³² described in *Biographia*, where it used to argue that there must be some prior form of unification to support the contingent processes of association described by Hartley. This parallel is furthered when one considers Coleridge’s claim that ‘in Hartley’s scheme the soul is present only to be pinched or *stroked*’³³, invoking the same decentralised tactile sensations that befell his dreaming counterpart.

²⁹ Ford, Coleridge on Dreaming, p.82.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., p.37.

³² *BL* I, p.116.

³³ Ibid., p.117.

Another point made by Ford that is worth examining briefly concerns the relation of single and double touch to sexual experience. Working within the intimate arena of Coleridge's dreamscape, Ford observes the various sublimations that are employed to ameliorate the confrontation with sexuality. This leads her to assert that '[s]ingle and double touch seem to be inexorably connected... with organs and the flesh, but most specifically with experiences of sexuality and the sexual organs'.³⁴ This claim is correct insofar as many of Coleridge's speculations on touch do involve references to sexuality, but the claim that these connections are inexorable deserves a small qualification. It may well be that, for Coleridge, experiences of sexuality invariably engage with double touch, but this doesn't mean that double touch is itself essentially sexual. On the contrary, there is evidence that Coleridge wanted to keep raw sexual desire confined to the realm of single touch. In a notebook entry, he writes about single touch in relation to fruition, the acquiring of a desired object, as 'the intensest single Touch'.³⁵ There is an indication that the specific form of fruition he has in mind here is sexual, going on to make reference to 'Λιβιδινοσιτᾶτ των Ἰδιωτων [libidinosity of idiots]' and then later to the 'rutting time of brutes'³⁶, but it ought to be also be noted that all of this occurs within a broader context of systematic classification. The stated aim here is to 'trace the Ministry of the Lowest to the Highest, of all things to Good/ and the presence of a certain abstract Idea or Generical Idea, in the Top, Bottom, & Middle of each Genus'³⁷: to offer a theory of touch that can encompass all its various manifestations, but also preserve distinctions. This comes from the same entry that frames double touch as a response to necessitarianism, so questions of volition are still salient. Given this context, the sexual instincts of brutes and idiots would function as examples of the lowest end of the touch spectrum, following the methodological commitment of going from 'Lowest to Highest'. Modiano observes how touch's proximity to sexual instinct was one of the qualities that led to its being denigrated in neo-classical aesthetics, citing a remark made by the neoplatonic philosopher Marsilio Ficino that sensations of touch could have 'no influence whatsoever on our perceptions of beauty... [because] the desire which they provoke "is called, not love, but lust or madness"'.³⁸ By beginning with examples that directly address this connection to lust, Coleridge contains them within a lower strata of touch phenomena - that of single touch. This has important ramifications for the engagement with necessitarianism, as it represents the construction of a difference in kind between various tactile experiences rather than

³⁴ Ford, *Coleridge on Dreaming*, p.114.

³⁵ *CNI*, 1827.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *CNI*, 1827.

³⁸ Modiano, 'Coleridge's Views on Touch and Other Senses', p.30.

simply one of degree. Without this difference in kind, the necessitarian can always explain volition as essentially the same deterministic process that is seen most starkly in the automatic instincts of sexual lust; but with it in place, Coleridge is able to concede the automatic nature of biological urges without thereby also jeopardising deliberate moral action.

iii -The phantom limb and touching hands

This framing of double touch as operating beyond the automatic processes of biological stimuli combines neatly with the previous reference to Coleridge's critique of Hartley, and represents an opportunity to introduce phenomenology into the discussion through a similar critique of mechanistic psychology given by Merleau-Ponty. Coleridge and Merleau-Ponty both take issue with a materialistic methodology that explains experience purely by reference to objective causal processes. In Coleridge this manifests in 'Hartley's hypothetical vibrations in his hypothetical oscillating ether of the nerves',³⁹ which forms the material foundation of all thought in the associationist system. Merleau-Ponty addresses a more general tendency 'to insert the organism in the universe of objects ... [and] translate the functioning of the body into the language of the in itself and discover, beneath behaviour, the linear dependence of stimulus and receptor'.⁴⁰ The point that both are making is that to examine consciousness solely in materialist terms creates misleading distortions and unanswered questions. This results from an assumption that mental processes are wholly describable in terms of physical chains of causality impacting upon the body. Coleridge's opposition to this assumption has been covered in the previous discussion of thoughts and things, encapsulated in his remark that 'the mere quick-silver plating behind a looking glass... in this alone consists the poor worthless I! The sum total of my moral and intellectual intercourse dissolved into its elements are reduced to *extension, motion, degrees of velocity*'.⁴¹ Since the linear logic of material causality is wholly one-way, the inescapable passivity of necessitarianism looms large. The 'worthless I' of associationism is thus little better than the dislocated 'I' of nightmares detailed by Ford. Combining these two strands of analysis, what associationism fails to apprehend about ordinary subjective life is similar to that which goes missing in the nightmarish dreamscape: the sensation of double touch. In order to correct the myopic materialist outlook, double touch must

³⁹ *BL I*, p.106.

⁴⁰ *The Phenomenology of Perception*, p.84.

⁴¹ *BL I*, p.119.

therefore insert itself into the linear relation of physical causality and disrupt it through its quality as sensation.

Merleau-Ponty's insistence on 'abandoning the body as an object, *partes extra partes* [a part as an external thing to another part], and ... going back to the body which I experience at this moment'⁴² speaks to a similar holism which challenges the *de facto* prioritisation of the mechanistic approach. There are two sections in his analysis of embodied phenomenology that are of interest here, the first being the phenomenon of phantom limbs occurring in amputees. This discussion raises numerous questions about the status of consciousness and its relation to the body, posing challenges to physiological accounts that rely solely on linear physical causality. The basic challenge is obviously the fact that phantom limbs can still generate experiences, many of which can carry a clearly identifiable significance for the victim. Drawing from post-war psychological studies, Merleau-Ponty describes how 'a man wounded in battle can still feel in his phantom arm the shell splinters that lacerated the real one'.⁴³ The consequence of this fact is that it is evidently still possible for such experiences to be generated in the absence of the original site of stimulation. This immediately puts paid to simplistic models of sensation as existing in a one-to-one correlation with physical stimuli. Merleau-Ponty then outlines a more advanced solution that centralises networks of stimulation within the brain, reinscribing the linearity of causality so that it originates from the brain and works outward towards the remaining nerves where the limb once was.⁴⁴ Whilst this response goes some way to providing an explanation, it raises questions about the subject's own comprehension of the missing limb. It is observed how 'an emotion, a circumstance which recalls those in which the wound was received, creates a phantom limb in subjects who had none'⁴⁵, demonstrating how the meaning of the experience plays a role in itself alongside the operation of physical mechanisms. This event is only explicable if one asks about the lived quality of the experience, rather than just examining nerves and neurones. Merleau-Ponty nevertheless avoids any kind of shift into pure intellectualism, which would merely invert the hierarchy of mind and body in an equally problematic manner. He stresses how 'the severance of the nerves to the brain abolishes the phantom limb'⁴⁶, a fact which leaves no doubt that physical causality retains an indispensable

⁴² *The Phenomenology of Perception*, p.87.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.88.

⁴⁴ Richardson documents how similar conclusions about the implications of the phantom limb were beginning to emerge in the proto-neurology of the Eighteenth Century.

⁴⁵ *The Phenomenology of Perception*, p.88.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.89.

role in the overall phenomenon, even if can't be the whole story. The provisional conclusion drawn from these observations is that 'the phantom limb is not the mere outcome of objective causality; no more is it a cogitatio [a purely mental process]. It could be a mixture of the two only if we could find a means of linking the 'psychic' and the 'physiological', the 'for-itself' and the 'in-itself'.⁴⁷ What is needed is an approach which incorporates the account of experience within the jointly objective-subjective site of the body. To relate this all back to double touch, the phantom limb provides the other side of the coin to Coleridge's nightmare example. Whereas before it was single touch that predominated in place of double touch, here it is the other way around. With the localised site of stimulation removed, experiences of single touch - particularised moments of pain in this instance - remain possible by virtue of a pre-established bodily unity, one which on Coleridge's view would have to be predicated on the work of double touch blending all the senses together into a general feeling of embodiment.

A second example from Merleau-Ponty is that of grasping the left hand with the right hand and vice versa. This mundane occurrence is, he argues, a microcosm for the ambiguous and non-binary relation between subject and object at the heart of all embodied consciousness. In contrast to both the Coleridgean dreamscape and the phantom limb, this small but notable example of the touching hands draws the discussion of double touch out of the realm of negative definition and provides a positive instance of its dynamic relation to single touch. Merleau-Ponty describes the significance of these sensations: '[w]hen I press my two hands together, it is not a matter of two sensations felt together as one perceives two objects placed side by side, but of an ambiguous set-up in which both hands can alternate the rôles of 'touching' and being 'touched'.⁴⁸ One hand always takes the lead as the material manifestation of a subjective intention, while the other becomes the material object that is encountered by this extension. Merleau-Ponty aptly calls these experiences 'double sensations [sensations doubles]'⁴⁹, the salient element of which is that they rely on a naturally interchangeable relationship between perceiver and perceived. Coleridge is clearly interested in similar experiences, as evidenced by a complicated list of specific tactile situations in an 1805 notebook entry, including 'when I hold a thing with my Teeth', 'when I press a bit of sugar with my tongue' and 'a Lover's Hand grasping the soft white hand of his mistress' all of which fall under the general heading of

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ *The Phenomenology of Perception*, p.106.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

‘Touch—double touch’.⁵⁰ However, whilst Merleau-Ponty’s example is fruitful for illustrating single and double touch operating in tandem, it is important to emphasise that ‘double sensations’ and double touch are not synonymous. Double sensations are ones where the roles of toucher and touched are able to change fluidly within a unified site of embodiment, meaning that they necessarily involve double touch as one pole of this process. In relation to Coleridge’s terms, double sensations are those which allow both the single touch of localised sensation and the double touch of unified feeling to intermingle. However the roles might fall at a given moment, the touching hand will be subject to the internalised unity of double touch whereas the hand being touched will be subject to the externalised particularity of single touch. The difference is that Coleridge is more interested in fixing each individual type of experience whereas Merleau-Ponty’s aim is to account for the fluidity of the overall phenomenon of embodiment that encapsulates them all.

Both these examples point towards a fundamentally important aspect of Coleridgean double touch and Merleau-Pontian embodied consciousness: the constitution of the subject’s world of experience. Coleridge’s discussion of ‘the generation of the Sense of Reality and life out of us’ parallels Merleau-Ponty’s account of the role embodiment plays in the manifestation of a stable, objective world:

Prior to stimuli and sensory contents, we must recognise a kind of inner diaphragm which determines, infinitely more than they do, what our reflexes and perceptions will be able to aim at in the world, the area of our possible operations, the scope of our life[.]⁵¹

This pertinently bodily metaphor of the inner diaphragm is indicative of what Merleau-Ponty calls the ‘*pre-objective*’⁵² apprehension of the world, which articulates the latent first-person mode of being operating apart from any third-person consideration of oneself as an object amongst many others - the perspective of natural science. What the inner diaphragm of embodied consciousness shares with double touch is a position prior to objectivity, allowing both to play a role in constituting it. The discussion of nightmares, phantom limbs and touching hands offers a set of concrete examples to give a sense of what double touch is on an experiential level before moving on to any further functions it might perform. This is what will be examined in the second part of this

⁵⁰ CN II, 2399.

⁵¹ *The Phenomenology of Perception*, p.92.

⁵² Ibid.

analysis: showing how double touch makes the transition from a claim about general embodied consciousness to one concerning the nature of human volition designed to undermine necessitarianism.

iv - The roots of judgement and action

In order to provide a phenomenological commentary on the connection between double touch and Coleridge's account of will and volition, the later work of Husserl provides a useful parallel through its exploration of the corporeal foundations of cognitive activity. The work which is of interest here is the posthumously published *Experience and Judgement* (1948), which as one of its English translators, James Churchill, argues, is 'remarkably free from the idealist overtones characteristic of many of Husserl's works... [and is] evocative of something on the order of Merleau-Ponty's "incarnate consciousness" rather than the transcendental ego.'⁵³ Husserl's aim in *Experience and Judgement* is to provide an account of how all judgements emerge out of a primordial field of lived experience. The category of judgement here is not merely limited to the predicative - 'the book is red' for example - but is instead meant to cover all forms of judgement, be they theoretical, practical or aesthetic. What interests Husserl is the relationship obtaining between a passive subjectivity that is susceptible to the affective input of the world and an active subjectivity which directs, guides and discriminates its own conscious regard. As soon as the activity-passivity dynamic is combined with an analysis of the origins of practical judgements, the connection to Coleridge's concerns about necessitarianism becomes clear. In addressing questions of will and volition, this section will return to the attack on Hartley's theory of associationism examined in chapter one; whereas before the emphasis was on situating this critique within the wider context of *Biographia*'s overall argument, here it will be treated as Coleridge's most prominent engagement with a necessitarian model of volition. By providing his own account of how embodiment is experienced, Coleridge's account of double touch is able to frame the body as an affective threshold between passive sensation and active practical volition, complicating and contesting the necessitarian paradigm.

The groundwork for comparing Coleridge's conception of double touch and volition with Husserl's account in *Experience and Judgement* has already been laid in the analysis of anti-psychologism. Like with Merleau-Ponty, Husserl's affinity with Coleridge stems from his insistence on eschewing

⁵³ Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, ed. Ludwig Landgrebe, trans. James Churchill and Karl Ameriks (London: Routledge, 1973), p.xvii.

the natural scientific methods of psychology. This is because classical psychology takes the external world as ‘a universe determined in itself [an sich bestimmten], whose factual determinations are to be ascertained by science’.⁵⁴ To treat the world in these strongly materialist terms severs any possibility of a synthetic or constitutive role to be played by consciousness, which in turn means that consciousness itself comes to be understood as just a product of the inputs from this self-sufficient physical reality. In his critical pastiche of materialism, Coleridge makes a similar point by arguing that it presents objects of consciousness as a physical *fait accompli* without any reference to mental life. Borrowing a point from Schelling’s *System*, he states that ‘in our immediate perception, it is not the mere power or act of the object, but the object itself, which is immediately present’, continuing that ‘we might indeed attempt to explain this result by a chain of *deductions* and *conclusions*; but... the very faculty of deducing and concluding would equally demand an explanation’.⁵⁵ This is the challenge that Husserl sets himself in *Experience and Judgement*, to show how subtle processes of judgement - which lay the ground for the higher level conscious acts of deducing and concluding - play a crucial role in constituting the objective world which psychology takes as its starting point.

Much of the analysis provided in *Experience and Judgement* develops the account of association from *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Syntheses* examined previously, particularly in relation to how passive consciousness becomes structured by its processes. In keeping with his anti-psychologistic methodology, Husserl insists that ‘every interpretation of association and its laws which makes of it a kind of psychophysical natural law, attained by objective induction, must ... be excluded’⁵⁶, arguing that the essence of association is not its material manifestation (such as Hartley’s ‘medullary vibrations’), but rather its role in the formation of the most basic relations that can be made between objects of consciousness. Husserl’s presentation of association in *Experience and Judgement* frames it as constitutive of what he calls ‘the sphere of passive pre-giveness [Vorgegebenheit]’⁵⁷, the indistinct field of rudimentary similarity and difference out of which more concrete conscious relations arise. Husserl describes the operations of association in terms reminiscent of those that Coleridge uses to describe double touch, speaking of a ‘blending [Verschmelzung]’ which transforms this field of experience into ‘a unity [Einheit]’.⁵⁸ It is worth

⁵⁴ *Experience and Judgement*, pp.42-3.

⁵⁵ *BL I*, p.134.

⁵⁶ *Experience and Judgement*, p.75.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.74.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.75.

emphasising that this sphere of passivity is not to be understood as that of a passive subject being mechanically stimulated by an objective world, but rather as the automatic first contact which consciousness makes with this world. This kind of primordial association creates a proto-logical structure that the mind applies to reality, rather than a stream of *de facto* connections inherited from it. As if in direct response to Coleridge's talk of the 'phantasmal chaos' of Hartleyan association, Husserl states that association is 'not a pure chaos, a mere "swarm" of data [nicht ein bloßes Chaos, ein bloßes "Gewühl" von "Daten"]'⁵⁹ but is more like the rough sketches that an artist makes before committing to any definite line or shape.

It is necessary to unpack the notion of passivity being employed here, as it constitutes a major link back to the discussion of double touch. In terms of what he is opposing, Coleridge neatly encapsulates the threatening passivity inherent in necessitarianism in the following image:

Conceive, for instance, a broad stream, winding through mountainous country with an indefinite number of currents, varying and running into each other according as the gusts chance to blow from the opening of the mountains. The temporary union of several currents at once, so as to form the main current of the moment, would present an accurate image of Hartley's theory of the will.⁶⁰

Coleridge is perturbed by the irreducible contingency within Hartley's system, which nullifies any sense of mental life as guided by rationally normative principles. There is, however, another element of this presentation, the unidirectional nature of the stream pushed incessantly forward by external forces. It is in opposition to this unidirectional model of passivity that both Husserl's account of associational affectivity and Coleridge's double touch must be understood. For Husserl, the 'phenomenologically necessary concept of receptivity is in no way exclusively opposed to that of the *activity of the ego*'⁶¹, since it does nothing to curtail the ego's capacity to direct its attention. On the contrary, the associative blending that occurs at the level of receptivity constructs a context in which higher level cognitive activity can manifest itself. Husserl thus concludes that 'receptivity must be regarded as the lowest level of activity'⁶² as even on this level consciousness is still

⁵⁹ Ibid. p.72 The original German is included in these instances to anticipate the objection that these semantic parallels might simply be fortuitous translation.

⁶⁰ *BL* I, p.110.

⁶¹ *Experience and Judgement*, p. 79.

⁶² Ibid.

working *with* the world in order to make meaningful experience possible. This interplay of activity and passivity has already been identified in Coleridge's metaphor of the water-insect, which insofar as it '*wins* its way up the stream, by alternate pulses of active and passive motion'⁶³ adapts the previous mountain image to give a fuller indication of the dynamics at work in Coleridge's model of volition. The moments when the insect allows itself to be carried by the current correspond to Husserl's notion of receptivity, always retaining the possibility for the reintroduction of conscious activity. The passivity of the Coleridgean water-insect and the Husserlian associative field is thus not the passivity of unidirectional surrender, but rather a case of going with the flow as a default position in the absence of higher level mental direction.

To get to the nub of the relation between double touch and necessitarianism, attention can now shift towards the practical and ethical context of will and volition. Despite limiting himself to perceptual examples for the sake of simplicity, Husserl makes it clear that 'the ego, living in its concrete enviroing world, given over to its practical ends, is in no way a subject which is contemplative above all'.⁶⁴ This means that many of the judgements that a subject makes about their world are not going to be simple predications, they are instead going to be interwoven with attributions of value and experiences of emotion. Alongside the 'I am' of existence and the 'I think' of cognition, these practical judgements introduce a third principle in the form of the 'I can'.⁶⁵ Despite this shift in register at the higher level, Husserl nonetheless argues that 'practical activity, the positing of value, the judgement of value, is, as such, dependent on pre-given objects'⁶⁶, meaning that practical judgements still ultimately emerge out of the same field of experience as their theoretical counterparts. For moral and practical activities to have any meaning at all, they must at least in part be a reaction to the subject's world, rather than being a set of abstract principles laid on top of it. One of Husserl's key notions here is that of 'striving', which forms a practical analogue to his notion of intentionality. Rather than the mind's attention being directed towards its object in theoretical judgements, here the moral agent directs their practical efforts and actions towards some object of value - be it concrete or abstract. This striving is distinguished from fully volitional willing, as it takes place on the lower level of affectivity at the boundary between the ego and the world. Husserl does, however, indicate that '[o]n a higher level, this striving can also take the form

⁶³ *BL* I, p.124.

⁶⁴ *Experience and Judgement*, p.64.

⁶⁵ This phrasing is adopted from Lotz, *Affectivity to Subjectivity*.

⁶⁶ *Experience and Judgement*, p.53.

of a true act of will'.⁶⁷ The description of this affective element operating before the introduction of fully formed practical principles reconnects with Coleridge's definition of double touch as 'the *sensation* of volition' in *Biographia*; it also provides grounds for distinguishing this phenomenon from will and choice, as it occurs on a much more primordial level to both.

Just as theoretical judgements do not emerge out of a linear dependence on external stimulation on the Husserlian account, neither do practical ones. That being said, they still need some way of being integrated into the world, which is where the role of affectivity comes to the fore. Before the emergence of a higher level practical judgement, there is an affective dimension to the experience that accompanies the practical orientation of striving mentioned above. In this way, the interaction with objects within the world can engender experiences of value or disvalue on the level of feeling rather than abstract principle. Returning to the water-insect analogy, the affective response to worldly value would represent the moment of initial acquiescence to the current, providing the fulcrum from which to mount a burst of activity - in this context a fully-fledged moral judgement integrated with the principles of practical reason. Theoretical and practical judgements emerge out of the same layer of experience that involves a fusion of regulated passivity and directed activity. This allows the two halves of Coleridge's account of double touch to be brought together. On the level of sensation, double touch constantly unites the localised stimulations of the various senses into a unified experience of embodied feeling, a certain part of which manifests as the lived experience of value which lays the ground for meaningful practical decisions. This re-introduces an actively constitutive subjective role between the causal impact of the world and the moral activity of the agent, one which might be used as a response to necessitarianism. As Christian Lotz explains, this experience of immanent value must 'be understood as a response rather than a simple "reaction" to a physiological stimulus... [as] the stimulus-reaction scheme assumes an *immediate* causal chain, with no room for delay and no leeway within which the reaction might move'.⁶⁸ Double touch provides precisely this kind of delay, creating the gap between stimulus and action which will or choice can utilise. This being the case, Coleridge's point against necessitarianism would be that it conflates this faculty with the higher level judgements of will and choice, rather than seeing it for what it is: a bridging faculty that mediates worldly stimuli through a pre-established unity of embodied consciousness.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.86.

⁶⁸ Lotz, *Affectivity to Subjectivity*, p.50.

Having arrived at this more developed definition of double touch as a threshold between passive sensation and active practical volition, it is worth concluding by highlighting a moment in Coleridge's work which succinctly unites all the elements examined above. This occurs in his literary correspondence of 1821, which covers a broad range of philosophical topics and includes the following amongst its opening remarks:

I think, and while thinking, I am conscious of certain workings or movements, as acts or activities of my being, and feel myself as a power in which they originate. I feel myself *working*; and the sense or feeling of this *activity* constitutes the sense and feeling of EXISTENCE, i.e. of my actual being

In these workings, however, I distinguish a difference. In some I feel myself as the cause and proper agent, and the movements themselves as the work of my own power. In others, I feel these movements as my own activity, but not my own acts. The first we call the active or positive state of our existence; the second, the passive or negative state. The active power, nevertheless is felt in both equally. But in the first I feel it as the *cause* acting, in the second as the *condition*, without which I could not be acted upon.⁶⁹

Although the passage doesn't use the term, the phenomenon which Coleridge is describing here shares multiple key features with double touch. The first section details the element of sensory unification; rather than addressing any particular sense, Coleridge here picks out 'the sense and feeling of existence', the centre of the circular sensorium which emerges out of being an embodied human being rather than a bundle of receptors, linking back to Merleau-Ponty's notion of the 'inner diaphragm'. This is then expanded by the introduction of the positive and negative modes that inhere within this sense of embodied existence, as well as the nuanced distinction between activity and acts. While in isolation this distinction is initially perplexing, it fits neatly into the previous discussion of activity and passivity. As Coleridge points out, the sense of activity and passivity that he is interested in is underwritten by a deeper kind of activity, one which operates apart from the higher level of distinct acts. This connects to Husserl's notion of the affective experience that precedes and grounds all higher level judgements. Husserl describes how '[w]ith the active apprehension [of judgement] there goes hand in hand, in a double direction and according to a

⁶⁹ *SW&F* II, pp.925-7.

double form of modification [in doppelter Richtung und Modifikationsform], a modified activity belonging essentially to it.’⁷⁰ This modified activity, the same activity that is felt equally in Coleridge’s positive and negative modes of existence, might well be glossed the activity of double touch.

Double touch is not simply of interest because of its intriguingly sporadic status within Coleridge’s work. Much as the analyses of affect and association illuminate a lesser known element in Husserl, so double touch represents a part of Coleridge’s philosophical vocabulary which is not often entertained. Consistently aligned with abstract theorising and idealist system building, it is easy to forget that Coleridge’s primary philosophical mission was always one of unification; inviting a liminal engagement with the bodily, the sensory and the empirical alongside the transcendental. Given the role that the notion of will would go on to play in Coleridge’s moral and political philosophy, the investigation of double touch also shows how this concept is not simply postulated, but developed through careful reflection on what it means to be a willing subject. By working at the boundaries between subject and object, sensation and judgement, epistemology and ethics, double touch exercises a quiet but profound influence over the ways in which the diverse concerns of Coleridge’s multifaceted philosophical outlook might be brought together.

⁷⁰ *Experience and Judgement*, p.108.

VI - Alterity and the genesis of externality in *Opus Maximum*

i - The Challenge of the *Opus*

Of all Coleridge's prose works, the *Opus Maximum* presents the greatest challenge to a mode of philosophical criticism aimed at clarifying and analysing arguments. Whilst select manuscripts were utilised by scholars long before the text was compiled and published in 2002, the advent of its ostensible unification now offers the opportunity to try and understand how the manuscripts relate to one another. A thorough analysis of the choices made in the process of this compilation has been carried out in much greater detail elsewhere¹, but suffice it to say that treating the *Opus* as if it possessed the same level of textual coherence as *Aids to Reflection*, or even *Biographia*, is problematic. Not only is the text itself incomplete, but the available fragments are also organised according to an editorial line of best fit rather than intended authorial structure. In light of these limitations, the aim here is to focus on a handful of passages that illustrate the final stages of evolution in Coleridge's conceptions of selfhood, experience and reason. As such, phenomenological topics of sensibility, conscience and the mother-child relationship will take precedence over theological and metaphysical ones such as Absolute Will, trinitarian theology and *Naturphilosophie*.² Insofar as any of these themes do enter into the following analysis, attention will instead be paid to Coleridge's attempts to locate and traverse the limit between two philosophical modes: one grounded in experience, the other radically independent of it.

Given that most of the preceding analysis has focused on *Biographia*, the decision to move straight to the *Opus* requires some justification. One attempt to draw out this connection is found in Thomas McFarland's extensive prolegomena, which treats the *Opus* as an effort both to overcome the pantheistic undertones of *Biographia* and to integrate the ethical and religious considerations in works such as *Aids to Reflection* and the *Essay on Faith* (1820).³ Whilst much of the *Opus* is given over to creating distance from Schelling's philosophy of identity, the extent to which this constitutes a break with *Biographia* is debatable. As was argued in chapter two, *Biographia* itself shows many signs of performing the first steps of this distancing from Schelling insofar as it refuses to endorse the ontological identity of subject and object and gives far more credence to a provisional

¹ Cf. McFarland's Prolegomena as well as Murray Evans' *Sublime Coleridge* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012)

² These topics are covered in Evans, as well as Jeffrey Barbeau, *Coleridge's Assertion of Religion: Essays on the Opus Maximum* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006).

³ *OM*, p.cxxx.

philosophy of consciousness over a speculative philosophy of the Absolute. While *Biographia* certainly skirts the borders of such a system, it specifically holds back from it so as to try and devote attention to the imagination and fancy. In other words, treating a metaphysically informed work of poetic criticism as an abortive work of systematic metaphysics could well be said to overstate its aims. By framing the *Opus* as a development of *Biographia*'s themes rather than a clean break, the aim will be to show how the first order principles expounded in the fragmented former can be understood through their relation to the second order questions of poetics and textual criticism examined in the latter.⁴ This connection will be supplemented with a brief analysis of Coleridge's conception of the symbol, which provides many of the philosophical resources for re-examining the system of proto-phenomenological poetics sketched previously in light of arguments presented in the *Opus*.

One of the main themes from the *Opus*, and certainly the most appropriate for a phenomenological analysis, is Coleridge's account of conscience. As well as being a way to integrate ethical and theological questions into a transcendental framework, this account also changes this framework at a fundamental level. Conscience, Coleridge claims, is 'the commencement of experience and the indispensable pre-condition of all experience'⁵, it is 'not a mere mode of our consciousness, but presupposed therein'.⁶ Despite making similar variants of this argument elsewhere⁷, it is only in the *Opus* that Coleridge offers a sustained argument in its favour. One of the most significant consequences of the claim is that it precludes any kind of strong idealism, since if consciousness has a precondition it cannot function as the foundation of a philosophical system. This creates a rupture in the comparison between Coleridge and Husserl, since if conscience is prior to consciousness then in a strictly Husserlian framework it cannot be considered a proper object for phenomenological analysis. However, as was pointed out in the previous chapter, this highly subjectivist conception of the task of phenomenology represents one of the main points of disagreement between Husserl and his successors, and is one of the greatest drivers of subsequent developments within the tradition. Thus, even if the *Opus* marks the limits of understanding

⁴ This approach is in part an attempt to build on James Vigus's illustration of the continuity between the *Opus*, the *Biographia* and *The Friend*. Cf. "With his garland and his singing robes about him": The persistence of the literary in the *Opus Maximum* in Barbeau (ed.), pp.97-120.

⁵ *OM*, p.72.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.73.

⁷ Cf. *Aids*, p.125 and the 'Essay on Faith' in *SW&F* II, pp.836-7.

Coleridge's proto-phenomenology in Husserlian terms, it is still nonetheless amenable to being understood through other kinds of phenomenology developed in its wake.

ii - Levinas and the primacy of the ethical

The figure who emerges as an illuminating analogue for Coleridge's concerns here is Emmanuel Levinas, whose conception of ethics as first philosophy makes him well suited for a phenomenological reading of the *Opus*. Responding primarily to the work of Husserl and Heidegger, Levinas's work attempts to do justice to the role which alterity, the encounter with the other, plays in the formation of experience. This 'alterity' does not simply mean that which is strange or unfamiliar, but denotes a much more radical sense of that which cannot possibly become an object of consciousness. Much like Coleridge's claims about conscience, a major consequence of this is that it highlights the limits of phenomenology as an analysis of pure consciousness. The salient feature of genuine alterity is not how it appears to the subject, but how it resists the effort to make it appear, a paradoxical dynamic which informs a central question of Levinas's philosophy: how to articulate an account of alterity without reducing it to functions or presentations of first-person consciousness. This prompts an analysis which tries to apprehend otherness through its inability to be fully known, stemming from an encounter with what Levinas calls the 'face' of the other. This term does not denote any flesh and blood object, an assemblage of biological features, but rather the enigmatic boundary between the realms of self and other, involving an apprehension that what is given to consciousness is necessarily incomplete. The nature of this resistance is nuanced, since it is neither physical nor psychological; it is not simply a case of encountering something supremely stubborn or recalcitrant that defeats one's power to objectify it.⁸ The subject of consciousness is still capable of reducing the face simply to what is given, but the point is that, in the first instance, the face possesses an inherent phenomenological quality that gives the lie to such a reduction. Against the tradition of intersubjectivity emerging out of idealist thinkers such as Fichte and Hegel, Levinas does not characterise the face as an encounter that proceeds via an inverted form of self-consciousness (a not-self or not-I), but rather as a moment of revelation that precedes any such process.⁹ It is this moment of revelation, prior to any reaction by the self, that makes the face a supremely ethical notion which grounds responsibility. The face's resistance to the self must to be understood through this intrinsic responsibility, as the manifestation of a fragile ethical

⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991). p. 197.

⁹ Ibid p.204.

entreaty that can be obeyed or defied: either apprehend the other as wholly beyond one's powers of comprehension, or conversely totalise them into some system of knowledge. Any interaction which allows the other to remain as other thus relies on an acceptance that what they are cannot be brought within the bounds of one's own subjectivity. The key to this relation is that is non-coercive, the other does not force recognition but must be granted it in response to the encounter with the face. This acceptance of a non-coercive limitation upon one's own knowledge that is at the heart of the face's ethical status.

Levinas's philosophy has already been given serious critical treatment within Coleridge scholarship in David Haney's *The Challenge of Coleridge*, which offers a comprehensive account of the connection between the two in relation to questions of ethics and hermeneutics. In terms of Coleridgean material, Haney's account covers much of the material in the *Essay on Faith* that is carried over into the *Opus*, as well as touching on manuscripts for the work itself. However, the appearance of this study prior to the 2002 edition of the *Opus* means that several passages with very Levinasian elements are not covered, the most notable example being the mother-child relationship. As such, rather than attempting a similarly broad analysis here, the focus will be on bringing together Levinas's main phenomenological work *Totality and Infinity*, which examines how the face to face encounter is made possible from within the insular realm of sensibility, with the fragmentary account of the mother-child relationship in the *Opus*. Before getting into specifics, however, an important qualification needs to be made about the difference in these respective philosophical projects. This difference stems from the fact that Coleridge's discussion of alterity is directly rooted in theology, specifically the doctrines of divine ideas and *deus alter et idem*, God the other and the same, and is plainly designed to vindicate a trinitarian interpretation of Christian metaphysics.¹⁰ There is no question that for Levinas this overtly religious grounding, even if tinged with ineffability, would be unacceptable as an analysis of alterity, since to ground the concept within divinity makes it part of a conceptual system which undoes its status as truly other. This difference is heavily informed by distinctive religious traditions, as is noted in Haney's description of 'the difference between Levinas's fully Hebraic approach and Coleridge's heterodox combination of the Hebraic sense of God's absolute otherness with the Christian concept of an accessible, incarnated God'.¹¹ Another version of this difference is evident in the various conceptions of ethics that Coleridge and Levinas employ. Following Kant, Coleridge's ethics are characterised in terms of

¹⁰ Cf. Douglas Hedley, *Coleridge, Philosophy and Religion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹¹ Haney, p.215.

rules and principles, with the end goal being a divinely sanctioned moral law which applies unconditionally to all human conduct. For Levinas, by contrast, ethics describes an encounter between the self and the other in a context which precludes any attempt to reduce the latter to something knowable and predictable. Appealing to fixed normative functions such as laws and rules ruptures this ethical encounter by introducing a supposedly disinterested third party above and beyond both self and the other, allowing the former to circumvent the engagement altogether through the *a priori* application of a principle. Levinas's stringency on this issue is indicative of his constant attempt to articulate an account of ethics as a first philosophy, establishing the language and direction from which all other forms of thought follow rather than being itself determined by traditionally fundamental discourses such as logic, history or even ontology. In this respect, Coleridge's identification of the moral law with Reason in the form of God's Absolute Will puts him squarely within a tradition of thinking about ethics which Levinas sets out to challenge.

Whilst this difference between Coleridge and Levinas is important to note, it is only of any interest insofar as it relates to various points of similarity. Indeed, given that Levinas sets himself up in opposition to more or less the entire mainstream tradition of prior Western philosophy, any engagement with his thought necessarily requires the negotiation of deep-rooted differences. What is of interest is how, even from within this tradition, Coleridge nonetheless manages to address a number of philosophical problems which are also addressed by Levinas. Arguably the most important of these is how both thinkers are motivated by a form of what John Llewellyn calls 'ontological claustrophobia'¹²: a discomfort with philosophical attempts to encapsulate all entities without remainder. This discomfort is visible in Coleridge's rejection of the Schellingian attempt to ground the subject-object polarity within the notion of the absolute, a move which he sees as leaving no room for God beyond a pantheistic identification with nature itself. In Levinas this comes through in his reservations about Heidegger's attempt to define Being as an all-encompassing process of ongoing disclosure, rather than paying attention to the moments of undisclosable alterity which manifest between separate beings. In the terms of Levinas's title, *Totality and Infinity*, this represents a break away from a philosophy of totality, in which alterity is thought of as a problem to be overcome, and towards one of infinity, where the very inability to overcome alterity becomes the starting point for thought. What this leads to for both thinkers is an analysis of how an irreducible difference — one which puts all attempts to totalise into question — can be

¹² John Llewellyn, *Emmanuel Levinas: The Genealogy of Ethics* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.11.

discovered through reflecting on the relationship between self and other. What makes Coleridge and Levinas particularly comparable on this point is the fact that both characterise this relation as primarily ethical, as opposed to epistemological. For example, when Levinas remarks that ‘Conscience and desire are not modalities of consciousness among others, but its condition’¹³, this would function perfectly well as a paraphrase of Coleridge’s claim in the *Opus*. Whilst Levinas’s use of these terms has slightly different meanings, in a broad sense it address the same point: that the significance of alterity lies in a move away from thinking of the other as an object of consciousness and instead describing a much more compromised relationship of moral responsibility. In Coleridge’s case, this interpersonal ethical relationship is crucial for preserving the link between human beings and God, as it preserves moral responsibility whilst simultaneously resisting any attempt to collapse this distinction into the common denominator of a monistic metaphysics, the prime example being Spinoza’s ‘substance’. Levinas also identifies Spinoza’s monism as an important adversary, at one point describing his argument as ‘at the antipodes of Spinozism’.¹⁴ Thus, whilst Coleridge’s ultimate motives might differ from Levinas’s in being explicitly theological, the arguments he makes along the way involve the same elevation of responsibility and conscience ahead of knowledge and consciousness. As Haney notes, ‘[a]lthough Coleridge does not see ethics as “first philosophy” quite as explicitly as Levinas does, the priority of the ethical is always implicit.’¹⁵

iii - Defining conscience

Much like his use of the term imagination, Coleridge’s sense of conscience is one that requires some semantic care. In ordinary parlance the word might possess connotations of a vague moral instinct connected with something like an internal ethical barometer. Coleridge’s conception of the term, on the other hand, identifies it as a distinct human faculty in its own right which, rather than being guided by individual instinct, is responsive to the demands of universal reason. His most succinct formulations of this term appear in the *Essay on Faith*, many of which are carried over into the fragments of the *Opus*.¹⁶ The crux of Coleridge’s definition in the *Essay* rests upon a distinction between two different conceptions of will, both of which are operative within moral activity.

¹³ *Totality and Infinity*, p.101.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.105.

¹⁵ Haney, *The Challenge of Coleridge*, p. 215.

¹⁶ *SW&F* II, pp.833-45.

Coleridge represents these symbolically as ‘- will’ and ‘+ will’¹⁷, which shall be referred to as ‘negative will’ and ‘positive will’ respectively. Coleridge’s discussion of will in general in the *Opus* contains the notable qualification that ‘we do not apply the term to the current of a stream, whether necessitated by the inclination of its channel or as the varying effect of the wind or tide of gusts from the openings of mountains on either bank’.¹⁸ This image directly parallels the critique of Hartleyan associationism in *Biographia*, demonstrating how, for all his philosophical position may have developed since then, he is still concerned with shifting the discourse surrounding will away from a cause and effect model of sensory stimulation. However, just as in the account of double touch, Coleridge is astute enough to realise that some vestige of the more empirical conception of will must be preserved in order to do justice to the full experiential quality of rational activity. Accordingly, positive will refers to what Coleridge calls the ‘personalising principle of Free agency’, which he glosses both with the Miltonic term ‘Arbitrement’ and the everyday word ‘choice’.¹⁹ Positive will shares a number of features with double touch, allowing agents to connect their actions with a sense of selfhood, being motivated by their own volition rather than being coerced by external forces. Negative will, by contrast, limits and defines this internalised sense of volition by linking to an imperative which it ought to conform to. In contrast to the individuating activity of positive will, negative will establishes a connection to a set of transcendent truths and principles which apply to all agents. This sense of will is informed by Coleridge’s transcendental conception of Reason as ‘the *superindividual* of each man by which *he* is *man*’, a small cognitive connection to the universal.²⁰ If positive will is understood as liberty or choice, then negative will might aptly be described as a sense of duty. It is the interaction and alignment of these two types of will which for Coleridge characterises the phenomenon of conscience, with positive will being proffered in the service of negative will — much like how in his conception of ideal poetic practice the personal, idiosyncratic products of the fancy must be made answerable to the transcendental acts of the imagination.

Despite their abstract technicality, what these formulations of will describe is something common to almost any kind of ethical thinking, the awareness of a distinction between the way one *does* act and the way one *ought* to act. With conscience understood as the union of individual choice and

¹⁷ *SW&F* II, p.837.

¹⁸ *OM*, p.17.

¹⁹ *SW&F* II, p.838. See also the account of the fancy which mentions ‘that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word CHOICE’ (*BL* I, p.305).

²⁰ *Ibid.*

'superindividual' principles, it might look like Coleridge's account is a thoroughly Kantian one insofar as it aims at the 'Self-subordination of the individual Will, ... to the reason'.²¹ Whilst the influence of Kant's moral philosophy is undeniable, Coleridge's account also operates beyond it by demanding not only an account of ethics as a set of principles, but also as a lived experience. Kantian ethics describes the pure deduction of the categorical imperative and its subsequent application to various normative questions of moral conduct; conversely, Coleridge's arguments in the *Essay* and the *Opus* focus on what the conditions are for conscience to emerge within the human subject, which involves a sophisticated analysis of its intersubjective genesis. This is indicative of a deeper difference within the philosophical methodologies of Kant and Coleridge. Kant's conception of will is always bounded by his epistemic humility, leading him to treat it as a merely regulative idea which can be said to govern the modes of human thought but not be known in itself. By comparison, Coleridge's Platonic conception of will as constitutive idea, i.e. a truly real element of things in themselves, allows for an analysis which, rather than simply taking freedom as a postulate, attempts instead to demonstrate how it manifests within the finite bounds of human thought.²²

In Kant's philosophy the spheres of practical and theoretical reason are kept distinct due to the inability of the latter to provide decisive grounds for the former. One of the main justifications for this separation comes from the third antinomy in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which argues that whilst freedom is not demonstrably incompatible with the deterministic causal system of the physical world it still cannot be proven, hence the need for practical to adopt it as a postulate.²³ Coleridge cites this disconnect between the practical and theoretical realms in *Biographia* as one of his main reservations about Kantian philosophy.²⁴ The reasons for this difference have already been examined in chapter two, and are rooted in Coleridge's reluctance to accept the strict distinction between phenomena and noumena at the heart of Kantian metaphysics. A useful parallel here is to Kant's treatment of the self in his transcendental deduction, where the phenomenal, empirical self can offer no reliable indication of any noumenal self beyond the stream of conscious impressions. Similarly in the case of freedom, the mere feeling of autonomy which accompanies human activity is rendered insufficient as the grounds for any strong sense of freedom as really existing in itself. For Coleridge, by contrast, the connection between these two is not immediately precluded, which

²¹ *OM*, p.84.

²² For discussion of this distinction between regulative and constitutive ideas, cf. Vigus, *Platonic Coleridge*.

²³ *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp.484-490.

²⁴ *BL I*, p.155.

leaves open the prospect of tracing how the interaction between positive and negative will that characterises conscience becomes possible.

As well as trying to move beyond the strict divisions that limit Kant's account of freedom to being a postulate, Coleridge is careful not to revert to an empiricist approach which eschews the transcendental and relies solely on the reports of sense experience to ground ethics. This approach limits the possibility for conscience to meaningfully connect with a law beyond the purview of consciousness, leading to a problematic ethical solipsism whereby not only the feeling of conscience (positive will) but also its appropriate aim (negative will) become located solely within the individual self. This is at the root of Coleridge's criticisms of the hedonic morality propounded by the 'doctors of Self-love'²⁵, most notably William Paley, who base morality in pleasurable sensations. Coleridge's criticism here is once again reminiscent of the strategy he employed against Hartley, arguing that since pleasures are contingent 'prizes in the lottery of life'²⁶ they provide no way to deduce a meaningful law. Further complications arise from the fact that since pleasure is in many cases the immediate result of biological stimulation, any relation to the agent's freedom is compromised. This threat leads Coleridge to explicitly differentiate between conscience and sensibility on the grounds that:

In the senses we find our *receptivity* and as far as our *personal* Being is concerned, we are passive; but in the facts of the Conscience we are not only *agents*, but it is by these alone that we know ourselves to be such; nay, that ... our very passiveness herein is an *act* of passiveness [in] that we are *patient*, not (as in the other case) simp[ly] *passive*.²⁷

This distinction between patience and passivity builds off the gap between volition and the sensation of volition opened with double touch, and blocks Coleridge's conception of conscience from the deterministic realm of natural causality that grounds the phenomena of sensation. As Stephen Cole observes, this distinction implies an understanding of personal agency as socially constituted, as 'it is only in the context of rational purposes for our actions (such as the purpose of treating others as persons rather than things), and further, of those purposes being manifested in

²⁵ *OM*, p.29.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.27.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.71.

actions, that it makes sense to speak of the will at all'.²⁸ The challenge facing Coleridge's argument at this juncture is how to account for conscience and agency in a manner that allows them both to manifest within experience without getting trapped within it and becoming reduced to the contingencies of sensory stimulation, retaining what Haney calls 'the experiential vocabulary' whilst 'sever[ing] that vocabulary from its materialist basis'.²⁹

The task facing Coleridge's account of conscience parallels the investigations of the imagination and double touch insofar as it involves a unification of the empirical and the transcendental, but conscience contains an element which sets it apart from these: alterity. It is certainly true that all three of these concepts involve articulating the way in which various philosophical binaries (subject-object, activity-passivity etc.) are able to interact, but the definition of conscience as operating between positive and negative will elevates the question of interaction into a new realm. In the cases of imagination and double touch, the oppositions under examination are both relatively secure, with the main difficulty emerging in how to find their meeting point. This is certainly not to say that co-ordinating such binaries is straightforward, but rather that they possess a stable connection to various features of human experience. Thus, for example, tables and chairs are paradigmatically objective whilst beliefs and emotions are paradigmatically subjective, and but for the efforts of sceptics or reductionists such entities are not disputed in themselves, only with regard to the best way to characterise their interrelation conceptually. This is not the case when it comes to conscience, with the notion of negative will breaking decisively from the pattern of being available to experience in any standard sense. In order to be meaningfully distinct from positive will, negative will must appeal to that which cannot, even in principle, be brought fully into the fold of experience.

Here the connection between Coleridge and Levinas comes most sharply into focus, as the latter's philosophy offers an account of how the realm of consciousness is shaped by that which operates wholly beyond it, and how such a relation is to be articulated whilst retaining the sense of otherness that initially prompts the question. The prioritisation of the interpersonal, ethical relation towards the other is key to Coleridge's accounts of conscience in the *Opus* and the *Essay on Faith*. This argument begins with the claim that 'becoming conscious of a conscience, partakes of the nature of

²⁸ Steven E. Cole, 'The Logic of Personhood: Coleridge and the social production of agency' *Studies in Romanticism*, 30.1 (1991), 85-111. p.92.

²⁹ Haney, *The Challenge of Coleridge*, p.229.

an act³⁰, something which occurs independently from the input of the senses. This argument has structural parallels with those made in *Biographia* in relation to self-consciousness, which is likewise defined in terms of an act.³¹ In the case of self-consciousness, this follows from the argument that no singular sensory impression furnishes grounds for the identification of an ‘I’ which unites them all. The reason this argument emerges again in the case of conscience derives from an examination of what the act of self-consciousness entails. Given that the entire realm of empirical impressions has been ruled out as grounds for this reflexive self-identification, one must either treat self-consciousness simply as a *fait accompli* or search for a ground elsewhere. For Coleridge, locating this ground requires reflecting on experiences in which the self is understood not as relating to its own stream of impressions, but instead to something entirely other than itself. Thus, he argues ‘the third pronoun “*he*”, “*it*”, etc. could never have been contradistinguished from the first... “I”, “me,” etc. but by means of a second. There could be no “*He*” without a previous “*Thou*”.³² The real significance of indexicals like ‘he’ and ‘it’ relies on their reference to something that exists independently of a self that thinks them. This leads to the claim that there could be ‘no distinct or conscious sense of the term “I”, as far as consciousness is concerned, without a “*Thou*”’³³, that the very act of self-consciousness is partially dependent on an apprehension of the other to create a sense of difference. Without the check to consciousness that the recognition of the other brings, there would be nothing to stop the conscious self from being identified as the ground of all experience, as Coleridge evidently believed was the case for idealism and phenomenalist empiricism. If the self is granted this supreme grounding function, its ability to individuate its own identify ultimately becomes jeopardised. From this it follows, Coleridge argues, that “if, then, there can be no “*He*” nor “*It*” without an “I”, and no “I” without a “*Thou*”, the solution of the problem must be sought for in the genesis or origination of the “*Thou*”.³⁴ Coleridge locates the origin of this all important “*thou*” in what he calls “an equation in which “*I*” is taken as equal to but not the same as “*Thou*”’³⁵, in acknowledging the existence of a distinctly separate personhood which cannot be located within the realm of the I’s presentations. Simply because the existence of this other consciousness cannot become an object for the self, its acknowledgement cannot be derived from the passive operations of the senses or the understanding and must therefore be the result of a ‘free

³⁰ *OM*, p.72.

³¹ *BL I*, p.279.

³² *OM*, p.75.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

act... which is the true definition of conscience”.³⁶ Understood in this sense, conscience is characterised as the responsive affirmation of that which lies beyond the purview of consciousness, an act which in turn provides the distinction by which consciousness acquires meaning as an individual self directed towards independent objects i.e, the act of self-consciousness.

iv - Enjoyment and Animal Being

For Coleridge and Levinas, it is clear that the recognition of otherness marks much more than just another moment in subjective experience; indeed, the difference manifested by the other is so pronounced that its recognition brings with it an entirely new kind of phenomenology. This is what Coleridge means when he states that ‘Conscience is the root of all Consciousness, and *a fortiori* the precondition of all Experience’, which mirrors Levinas’s remark that ‘the relation with infinity accomplishes experience in the fullest sense of the word’.³⁷ One question to raise of both these statements is how the engagement with otherness is even possible, as this would seem to require a manifestation within the very consciousness it was supposed to be the precondition of. In Coleridge’s case, this is indicative of the fact that ‘consciousness’ is being understood in a broader sense than just presentational awareness. As McFarland’s editorial notes detail, this sense of consciousness ‘is an explication of the implications contained in the prefix “con”—“with”³⁸, moving away from the internal, individualistic connotations that the word has in ordinary usage. This in turn has an impact on the specific sense being granted to the term ‘experience’ in this context. Unlike the tradition of empiricism, which understands all experience in terms of internal sensory impressions, Coleridge and Levinas use the term to denote something irreducibly external. In both accounts, this use of experience as exteriority relies on distinguishing it from sensibility, which takes on the role of the internalised impressions described by empiricism. Levinas describes this sensibility as ‘enjoyment’, a pre-cognitive engagement with the world which ‘is not yet the level of reflection’.³⁹ Enjoyment involves nothing more than the immediacy of sensation cut off from any cognitive interpretation of it. Coleridge hints at something comparable in his efforts to distinguish between the state of being belonging to all animals and the higher forms of self-conscious thought which he reserves solely for human beings. One such hint is when he makes the

³⁶ *OM.*, p.76.

³⁷ *Totality and Infinity*, p.25.

³⁸ *OM.*, p.73n²⁰³.

³⁹ *Totality and Infinity*, p.113.

concession that ‘Brutes may be and are *scious*, but not conscious’⁴⁰, which while it might be of questionable value as a statement of animal psychology nonetheless has important implications for understanding Coleridge’s wider philosophical argument. Somewhat paradoxically, by denying animals access to higher level cognition, Coleridge nonetheless implicitly grants them a form of rudimentary awareness which can function in the absence of a unified sense of self. It is this kind of awareness, which one might term ‘sciousness’ in accordance with Coleridge’s adjective, which accounts for human feelings prior to the equation between “I” and “Thou”. An appropriate way to understand the significance of the recognition of alterity is to examine these notions of enjoyment or ‘sciousness’, since it is these that lay the phenomenological foundations from which such recognition becomes possible.

Levinas’s account of enjoyment describes a mode of being which rejects all alterity in favour of satisfying immediate familiar needs, which register on a level of immediate affect rather than intellectual representation. Unlike Coleridge, Levinas is still willing to speak of an ‘I’ in this state, but it is an ‘I’ that enjoys rather than an ‘I’ that thinks, apprehending only that which belongs to the sensation. This process, which Levinas terms ‘nourishment’⁴¹, is described as ‘the transmutation of other into the same’ by which ‘an energy that is other... becomes, in enjoyment, my own energy, my strength, me’.⁴² Thus, for example, when food is consumed the ‘I’ ceases to think of it in terms of an external object and instead enjoys it in the form of taste and texture, as sensible qualities which are experienced immanently as belonging to the self. This conversion from external object to internal sensation gradually erases alterity, since a sensation, unlike an object, bears no distinction between appearance and reality, it is experienced totally, as opposed to perspectively. Levinas characterises this as a process whereby ‘representational content dissolves into ... affective content’⁴³, inverting the more traditional account of the relation between sensations and objects. In a complete reversal of empiricism, the data of the senses are construed not as phenomenal building blocks out of which perception is constructed, but rather as the end product of an assimilative process whereby external objects are converted into internal sensations. Coleridge identifies the same sense of internalised separation in a discussion of the ‘cultivation of the animal being’ where he describes the ‘direction of the senses to objects which, hav[e] no connexion with the beholder

⁴⁰ *OM*, p.73.

⁴¹ *Totality and Infinity*, p.111.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.187.

but by their qualities as so many stimulants of animal sensibility'.⁴⁴ In other words, things become functionally reduced to the sensations they occasion. Coleridge observes the block this creates in terms of ethical relations when he asks '[w]hat can the fruit, or the sweetmeat, call to mind, but that individual's own solitary and incommunicable feelings?'⁴⁵ These objects are, accordingly, 'incapable of being sympathized with', since they bear no reference to anything other than the sensation 'in which all is received and nothing in the same moment given in return'.⁴⁶ These one-sided conversions performed by enjoyment and animal being are thus entirely incompatible with anything like a negative will, since they are incapable of preserving a stable relationship with alterity.

The presentation of sensory stimulation as incapable of achieving external significance forms an integral part of Coleridge's criticism of ethical systems that champion self-love in the absence of any transcendental moral law. This takes the form of a syllogistic analysis whereby propositions such as 'it is my duty to love all men' and 'it is my duty to love all persons' are shown to lead without difficulty both to the conclusions 'it is my duty to love myself' and 'it is my duty to love my neighbour', but starting with the proposition 'it is my nature to love myself' presents no way of getting to the conclusion 'it is my nature to love my neighbour'.⁴⁷ While this is presented as a mere matter of logical inference, it is underwritten by a phenomenology of natural needs and wants based on the solipsistic nature of sensation. Nature, Coleridge argues 'simply impels man to gratify himself, and even this not directly or immediately: for in fact it impels us only to remove the pain inflicted by positive want, or the restlessness and uneasiness produced by the fancy from the remembrance of prior gratification'.⁴⁸ It is notable that this account of need is characterised as 'positive', not merely as an absence which gratification fills in. Levinas proposes a similar conception of need which 'cannot be interpreted as simple lack'⁴⁹ as this would obscure the relationship it has with gratification. Coleridge adds further nuance to his account when he notes how:

[N]ature in this respect does not difference man from other animals but the

⁴⁴ *OM*, p.124.

⁴⁵ *OM*, pp.124-5.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *OM*, p.62.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Totality and Infinity*, p.114.

animal, including man, from the vegetable, inasmuch as the latter is forced into motion by the presence of stimulants... while the former is impelled by the absence of the requisite stimulants, of which locomotion and action are the consequences.⁵⁰

Animal nature is distinguished from vegetative nature by being granted a form of compromised activity that subsists in a pursuit of self-gratification — it is ‘impelled’ rather than ‘forced’. Looking back at Coleridge’s positive/negative will distinction, this state could well be said to represent a scenario where a basic form of positive will is present, but without the legislating influence of a negative will to direct it beyond the satisfaction of needs. This compromised break from pure passivity is also present in Levinas’s account, which describes how ‘[a]nimal need is liberated from vegetable dependence, but this liberation is itself dependence and uncertainty’.⁵¹ This uncertainty becomes the catalyst for the formation of a self that is distinct from its environment and must pursue its ends rather than have them passively provided. The significance of needs, which demand participation in their fulfilment is that they ‘are in my power; they constitute me as the same and not as dependent on the other’.⁵² Coleridge is somewhat more disparaging, presenting this state of being as a fallen analogue to fully formed self-consciousness. A self constituted by need, according to Coleridge, would be ‘in truth, no other than the feeling of life, its desires, its functions’ all of which forms an ‘image which, being always present to the senses, constitutes the sole person of which the sensual being is capable’.⁵³ Murray Evans correctly characterises this stage in the argument as an attempt to distinguish between true and false senses of self and self-consciousness⁵⁴, which helps to clarify the point Coleridge is making here. He is not saying that sensory and bodily experiences play no role in the overall formation of the self, but rather that an insistence on all elements of selfhood being fully and immediately present to the senses leads to an impoverished and misrepresentative conclusion about its nature. This is a point on which Coleridge and Levinas’s accounts diverge slightly, as Levinas sees the separated self which emerges out of enjoyment not as the myopic result of an overly empiricist philosophical outlook, but rather as an integral prerequisite to the subsequent emergence of genuine alterity. The only way that this alterity can truly manifest itself for Levinas is in contrast to the immediacy which comes from enjoyment.⁵⁵ For Coleridge, the

⁵⁰ *OM*, p.62.

⁵¹ *Totality and Infinity*, p.116.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *OM*, p.123.

⁵⁴ Evans, *Sublime Coleridge*, p.81.

⁵⁵ *Totality and Infinity*, p.148.

alterity which grounds genuine consciousness has a divine basis in the trinity which is instilled in infant consciousness through the relation with the mother. Relapsing into animal being is thus presented moralistically, depicting a benighted quasi-self driven by personal need. Where the two accounts reconnect is in their descriptions of the moment that fully punctuates the advent of alterity, leading to the formation of fully-fledged subjectivity.

v - The Face of the Mother

Having examined Coleridge's negative characterisation of animal being, a clearer picture of the role played by conscience in his philosophy can begin to take shape. Taken in isolation, the claim that conscience is the precondition of consciousness risks being understood as making the very strong claim that conscience is requisite for any kind of mental phenomena whatsoever; what it actually means is that conscience allows for experiences which are truly con-scious, rather than merely 'scious'. Since the 'scious' sensations of animal being can only result in solipsistic self-reference, it follows that the role of conscience is to grant access to a realm of experiences in which the world is apprehended in a fully externalised manner. This not only has major implications for ethics, as it makes possible a system of principles based on the existence of other agents, but also for epistemology, since it lays the foundation for a subject-object distinction which resists empiricist or idealist reductions into pure subjectivity. The fuller implications of this latter point intersect with the way Coleridge characterises reason and its relation to faith, which will be explored in more detail below. To begin with, however, the phenomenological roots of conscience stemming from the relationship between mother and child need to be examined.

There are a few points to be made about choosing to focus on the mother-child relationship as the focal point for an analysis of conscience. The first is that the two main sections that detail this relation do not mention conscience explicitly, being couched instead in the Platonic register of receptivity to divine ideas. It would technically be more accurate to say that what these sections deal with is the genesis of faith. Given, however, that Coleridge's discussion of faith is utilised as a way into the discussion of conscience, and that conscience itself becomes the prime example of what faith entails, it is clear that the two concepts are closely interrelated. If conscience is a paradigmatic form of faith, then it is legitimate to claim *a fortiori* that the origin of faith is salient to the origin of conscience. The second point concerns the parallels with Levinas's account of 'the face' and why they are worth pointing out. On a superficial level, the connection between the two

accounts might appear to consist in the fact that Coleridge's account details a literal face to face encounter, wherein '[t]he infant follows its mother's face, glowing with love and beaming protection'.⁵⁶ While such similarities are fortuitous, they are insubstantial without identifying the much deeper connection concerning the phenomenological significance of alterity, and how this contributes to the development of full consciousness. Indeed, one of Coleridge's main examples focuses not on apprehending the parent through vision, but instead through touch, demonstrating how the connection is not predicated on any specific mode of sensation, but on a capacity altogether different in kind which allows pure sensation to be transcended. Finally, a major reason why the mother-child relation is significant for this analysis is because of the highly literary form which it takes, and the philosophical implications of this. Insofar as Coleridge's metaphysics commit him to a conception of ideas which frames them as being more than logical postulates, his use of a descriptive account of how they emerge within experience ought to be understood as more than just a rhetorical gesture. In a move now familiar from the treatments of association, suspension of disbelief and double touch, Coleridge's appeal to a reflection on the nature of a specific experience demonstrates his continued commitment to a proto-phenomenological mode of analysis. Such an appeal is especially noteworthy in the discussion of conscience and faith, since it demonstrates that even when dealing with topics which operate beyond the limits of human consciousness the philosophical investigation still keeps one foot within the realm of lived experience.

The mother-child relation is introduced into Coleridge's analysis as the means by which the sensory confines of animal being can be overcome and the origins of personhood can emerge. Here he argues that the capacity for this overcoming is 'pre-existent'⁵⁷ within the infant, but unlike animal being, which the individual will develop independently in its 'self-unconscious'⁵⁸ manner, higher faculties such as conscience relies on the presence of another human being to actualise their development. This encounter with the other acts as a catalyst for awakening 'the first dawns of its humanity'⁵⁹ within the child, who is granted the ability to engage with this other being in a manner that will eventually form the basis for its own self-identification; in Coleridge's formulation, '[e]re yet a conscious self exists, the love begins, and the first love is love of ... another[,] [t]he Babe acknowledges a self in the mother's form years before it can recognise a self

⁵⁶ *OM*, p.131.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.119.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.120.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.121.

in its own'.⁶⁰ The mother's personhood is not apprehended by a conscious self, nor by the animal senses, but by love.⁶¹ The significance of this love is its essential reference to another person, to the mother's existence as a totally separate entity. It is then made clear that this relation ought not to be thought of as one of knowledge, since the child 'knows not what the Mother is, but still less does it know what itself is'.⁶² In lieu of an epistemic connection between the child and the mother, Coleridge's account instead details this first encounter in distinctly ethical terms, describing how the child 'clings to the Mother and has a right, and an utterable right, to cling to her'.⁶³ This right is not the result of logical deduction, nor of a social agreement between agents, but instead manifests within the phenomenology of this nascent intersubjectivity. This positioning of the ethical relation as prior to the epistemic is also a feature of Levinas's account, where it is presented not in terms of a right, but rather a command in the form of 'the primordial *expression*' emanating from the face, which Levinas describes in biblical fashion as "you shall not commit murder".⁶⁴ Both characterisations employ the same strategy of integrating ethical concepts such as rights and commands into the intrinsic nature of the encounter with the other. In Levinas's case, the unstated assumption that both parties in this encounter are adults means that either is capable of totalising the other, an equal capacity which forms the basis for responsibility. Conversely, Coleridge's infant exists in a position of total vulnerability, and obviously cannot present any totalising threat to the otherness of the mother, since it lacks the stable self-consciousness by which to do this. Once this stable self has been realised along with a fully-formed conscience, Coleridge's language moves much closer to Levinas's, describing how 'the presentations of our senses we call impressions, those of the conscience, commands or dictates'.⁶⁵ Through developing the ethical connection first manifested in the love of the mother, the child is able to progress from the vulnerability of possessing a right to the responsibility of bearing a command.

The mother-child relation forms the crux of getting from the passive, sensual realm of animal being to the self-conscious personhood which is answerable to conscience. When Coleridge describes how the infant first acknowledges a self in the mother's form, this acknowledgement cannot be

⁶⁰ *OM*, p.121.

⁶¹ For an in-depth analysis of the role that love plays in Coleridge's philosophy as a whole cf. Anthony Harding *Coleridge and the Idea of Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), as well as Haney's final chapter 'Love, Otherness and the Absolute Self' (*The Challenge of Coleridge*, pp.227-62).

⁶² *OM*, p.121.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Totality and Infinity*, p.199.

⁶⁵ *OM*, p.71.

understood in terms of apprehending an object or feeling a sensation, but rather as an ethical response to something unavailable to both these modes of experience. The mother's selfhood cannot be constructed piecemeal through the reports of the senses and so the phenomenological content of these reports must necessarily move beyond them. The significance of 'the warmth of the mother's bosom, the support of the mother's arms'⁶⁶, is that the antecedent unity of another person is apprehended as the origin of these sensations, resisting the internalising tendencies of animal being. This unity does not reveal itself in any one sensation, but instead acts as the basis by which sensory reports become able to refer to a genuinely external entity; as Coleridge puts it: 'the whole remains antecedent to the parts, not as composed of them but as their ground and proper meaning'.⁶⁷ The part-whole schema is also utilised in Levinas's account when he remarks that the other 'opposes to me not .. as though it were part of a whole, but [as] the very transcendence of his being by relation to that whole'.⁶⁸ In both instances, apprehension of the whole necessarily eludes consciousness whilst nonetheless influencing the meaning of what is given. In Coleridge's account, the mother thus becomes 'a someone unseen and yet ever present'⁶⁹, in much the same way that the face in Levinas's account 'is present in its refusal to be contained...[,] It is neither seen nor touched'.⁷⁰ The other's personhood is not hidden from vision like a concealed object that might be uncovered, but rather manifests as something which is resistant to any such uncovering.

The decisive turn in Coleridge's argument comes when the initial connection established by love becomes reflected back upon the child, and in so doing forms the basis for self-identification. By apprehending the mother's self through its alterity, rather than by inference from any given sensory presentations, the child gradually acquires a mode of relation by which it can identify to its own self in a similar manner. Coleridge provides a *via negativa* illustration of this process by describing how, if the mother's form is withdrawn, the child becomes thrown back on its own resources, resulting in the dissolution of its fragile selfhood: 'the three years child that has awoken during the dark night in the little crib by the mother's bed entreat[s] in piteous tones, "Touch me, only touch me with your finger... I am not here, touch me, Mother, that I may be here!"'⁷¹ Without an antecedent whole to ground its experience, the child reverts into the instability of animal being and loses its ability to

⁶⁶ *OM*, p.121.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p.131.

⁶⁸ *Totality and Infinity*, p.199.

⁶⁹ *OM*, p.126.

⁷⁰ *Totality and Infinity*, p.194.

⁷¹ *OM*, p.132.

relate to its own self. This is then alleviated by the resumption of the mother's touch, which operates in much the same way as the phenomena of double touch examined in the previous chapter, imbuing a localised tactile sensation with a meaning which implicates a wider, unified whole. Unlike double touch, however, the unity being referred here to is that of another self in the form of the mother. By repeated exposure to experiences such as this, the very meaning of which implies the existence of a form beyond phenomenal appearance, the child is given 'the earliest lesson of distinction and alterity'⁷², laying the foundation for how it can relate to its own self. This also represents the first manifestation of the negative will, since it is necessarily directed towards that which cannot be recapitulated into sensory need. By providing the means for the child to develop its identity through the vicarious figure of the mother, the basis is provided for the 'equation' of "I" and "thou" at the core of Coleridge's account of conscience. Through learning to identify the mother's self as an 'other' entity, rather than a conscious sensation, the child acquires 'a sense of alterity in itself, which no eye can see, neither his own nor others'.⁷³

The way subjects of experience relate to themselves as individuals is thus traced back to a relation with alterity which marks the limits of sensation. All the pieces are now in place for understanding how Coleridge arrives at his conclusion that conscience is the precondition of consciousness. Through constructing a phenomenological account of conscience mediated through the mother-child relation, the argument performs an immanent critique of pure consciousness by describing its encounter with the ethical limitations inherent to interpersonal alterity. What this critique seeks to demonstrate is how self-consciousness, instead of being thought of as a foundational absolute, must itself be understood as the result of an encounter with an independent being. In the absence of this encounter, the self meanders through a world of immanence without contrast, taking from the world only that which can be integrated into a the animalistic cycle of needs and satisfactions. The love of the mother pierces this closed system by inspiring a relation which, instead of reducing the object to immediate sensation, requires the recognition of something which cannot undergo this conversion and must be preserved in its otherness. The effects of this primordial loving connection are twofold: firstly, the child learns to identify itself as an independent being standing in relation to a transcendent other, relying on the mother's personhood as fixed point of difference by which its own self can acquire definition. Secondly, it becomes acquainted with the general metaphysical distinction between form and shape, which for Coleridge operates as the basis for judgements of

⁷² *OM*, p.132.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

objectivity.⁷⁴ Shape denotes the way in which things appear in immediate experience, to ‘whatever is visible, or rather, whatever is an object of sense as distinct from sensation’.⁷⁵ Form, by contrast, denotes ‘the idea of a whole anterior in thought to the parts’⁷⁶, which because it is supposed to ground the visible experience of a shape ‘must be invisible’.⁷⁷ Coleridge observes how ‘[a]s far as the mere impressions of the sense are alone in question, the dictum of Berkeley is incontrovertibly true: the sole *esse* of all objects in their *percipi*’.⁷⁸ Far from being an endorsement of Berkeley’s metaphysics, what this remark is meant to show is that if one tries to give an account of objects and objectivity based purely on shape, one is led to an idealism that is unable to locate any stable ground for the object’s independence from the mind. Once alterity, founded by conscience, is granted as a constitutive and foundational element of experience, however, the reduction of *esse* to *percipi* becomes permanently blocked, laying the foundations for consciousness as an intentional relationship between a subject and an independent object.

vi - Reverence for the invisible: alterity, reason and symbol

What the previous analyses have demonstrated is that Coleridge employs the same style of phenomenological argument in the *Opus* as in *Biographia*; in order to illustrate the deeper continuity between the philosophical projects of these two works, however, it is necessary to examine the ramifications of the former’s argument for Coleridge’s conception of reason. As was noted above, a primary aim of Coleridge’s argument in the *Opus* is to explain how the human being first becomes acquainted with divine ideas, describing this as a process of ‘Reason itself mutely prophesying its own advent’.⁷⁹ As well as grounding self-consciousness and objective intentionality, the encounter with the mother also facilitates the realisation of reason, understood as a revelatory relationship with the ideal. Reason in this sense, Coleridge claims, ‘is not the faculty of the finite’⁸⁰ but the means by which the human mind relates to infinity, a notion that he glosses as ‘*sine finibus*, not having, or essentially incapable of having, outlines; not bounded or boundable from without’, as opposed to ‘the popular meaning of “infinite”, viz. what is immeasurably vast’.⁸¹ In this respect,

⁷⁴ For a detailed analysis of the technical role of form in Coleridge’s philosophy and poetry cf. Reid.

⁷⁵ *OM*, p.134.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.129.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.122.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.86.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.87*.

Coleridge's infinity is distinctly Levinasian in the sense that it is defined by its resistance to totality, while at the same time still existing in relation to it rather than being utterly irreconcilable. Apprehending reason as a relationship with infinite alterity has a major bearing on the eidetic metaphysics that underpin the proto-phenomenological project of *Biographia*. In order to illustrate this, one can examine how Coleridge describes the 'advent' of reason within the mother-child relation as the genesis of a religious disposition; this can then be reflected back onto a cluster of key concepts operating in *Biographia*, namely the imagination as the means by which ideality is to be intuited and the poetic symbol as the means by which this ideality can be communicated through poetic works.

The crucial element of reason as it emerges out of the mother-child relationship is its inextricable relationship with the first dawnings of religiosity. Having outlined the infant's pre-conscious acknowledgement of the mother, Coleridge poses the question '[w]hy have men a Faith in God?', to which he offers the unusual answer that 'the Man, and the Man alone, has a Father and a Mother'.⁸² This is clearly not a statement about biological lineage, pointing instead to a profound significance that parental relationships have in the formation of religious faith. As has been demonstrated in the analysis of conscience, this significance stems from the fact that if the child is to truly apprehend the mother as a separate entity, it must accomplish this by some means other than the purely internalised processes of sensibility. By latching onto the personhood of the mother through love, the child acquires a knowledge that acts as the guiding phenomenological principle for how the accompanying impressions are subsequently comprehended; 'the mother exists as a One and indivisible something before the outlines of her different limbs and features have been distinguished by the fixed and yet half-vacant eye.'⁸³ Apprehending an antecedent unity that lies beyond the presentations of the senses eventually allows this same unity to be comprehended in a purely formal manner, leading to a situation where '[t]he father and the heavenly father, the form in the shape and the form affirmed for itself are blended in one'.⁸⁴ Through engaging with the finite personhood of the parent, the child gains the resources for engaging with the infinite personhood of God. Although Levinas's argument in *Totality and Infinity* largely avoids such theological matters⁸⁵, his account of the Other contains an observation that functions as an effective summary of this relation:

⁸² *OM*, p.122.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.131.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.132.

⁸⁵ Levinas actually states that the metaphysical relation cannot be identified with the theological (*Totality and Infinity*, p. 42), another instance of where his much more radical conception of alterity becomes incommensurate with Coleridge's.

There can be no “knowledge” of God separated from the relationship with men. The Other is the very locus of metaphysical truth, and is indispensable for my relation with God. He does not play the role of the mediator. The Other is not the incarnation of God, but precisely by his face, in which he is disincarnate, is the manifestation of the height in which God is revealed.⁸⁶

Interpersonal experiences, those which acknowledge alterity through an unrepresentable but nonetheless indispensable form, act as the phenomenological blueprint for the engagement with the divine.

This result of this process of early theological acclimatisation is described by Coleridge as ‘the reverence for the invisible... which is the essence and proper definition of religion’.⁸⁷ By framing a positive relation with invisibility as the phenomenological correlate of infinity, Coleridge’s account accords significantly with Levinas’s remarks about nature of metaphysical practice. Just as Coleridge is concerned to demonstrate how divine ideas must be apprehended via a process of interpersonally instantiated reason rather than individualistic sensory understanding, Levinas’ work argues that the relationship with infinity that grounds ethics must supersede anything that can be totalised within an individual consciousness. Setting this up in terms of his central conjunction, Levinas explains that ‘it is a relation with *a surplus always exterior to the totality*, as though the objective totality did not fill out the true measure of being, as though another concept, the concept of *infinity*, were needed to express this transcendence with regard to totality, non-encompassable within a totality and as primordial as totality.’⁸⁸ In strong contrast to the dynamics of need and satisfaction that fuel the life of enjoyment and nourishment, Levinas designates the metaphysical urge as a ‘desire for the invisible’.⁸⁹ Whereas in the process of need, alterity is disregarded in favour of whatever can be absorbed into the subject’s totality, desire is predicated upon preserving it. The same theme lies at the heart of the epistemological shift on which *Biographia*’s argument is predicated, encapsulated in Coleridge’s despairing description of the despotism of the eye: ‘we are restless because invisible things are not the objects of vision; and metaphysical systems for the

⁸⁶ *Totality and Infinity*, pp.78-9.

⁸⁷ *OM*, p.127.

⁸⁸ *Totality and Infinity*, pp.22-3.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.33.

most, become popular, not for their truth, but in proportion as they attribute to causes a susceptibility of being *seen*.' The previous examination of animal being showed how it was driven by needs which also manifest as a 'restlessness' that reflects a drive to bring about a state of sensory satisfaction, of having something exhaustively present within the self's purview. The philosophical edifice that Coleridge outlines requires the promotion of a form of metaphysical reflection that is sensitive to ideal laws rather than sensory presentations. The relationship between the poet and their experience, and by thus by extension the relationship between the critic and the text, must therefore foster the type of disposition that Levinas identifies with the metaphysical outlook, 'a desire without satisfaction, which precisely *understands* the remoteness, the alterity and the exteriority of the other'.⁹⁰ Rather than forcing metaphysical entities into 'a susceptibility of being *seen*', the reverential relationship with alterity necessitates that reason and ideality must, in accordance with their infinity, remain *unseen*. The critic interpreting the work of art must parallel Coleridge's example of 'the astronomer who measures and determines the motion of the solar orb by the vacuities and interstices of its luminous atmosphere, [and] sees by not seeing'.⁹¹ The fault does not lie in the fact that invisible objects are not made into objects of vision, but in the expectation that such totalisation is possible in the first place.

In addition to highlighting how the *Opus*'s embrace of alterity *qua* invisibility can inform the general project of *Biographia*, it is also possible to note how general themes in Coleridge's argument can also be understood through this relation. The first topic to consider in this regard is that of the imagination, specifically the invocation of the 'infinite I AM' in the definition of the primary imagination. Taking *Biographia* in isolation, Coleridge's philosophical preamble leaves little indication of why the imagination ends up being defined like this in relation to the divine.⁹² Read in light of the argument given in the *Opus*, however, this contrast of the finite mind to the divine self-consciousness can be understood as an acknowledgement that the imagination relies on a variant of the same alterity that generates conscience. In sum, if the imagination is the prime agent of human perception, and perception requires a genuine connection with externality, this must ultimately be grounded in the same maternally imbued receptivity towards the other. In order to perform its function as the 'true inward creatrix' the imagination must have something genuinely

⁹⁰ *Totality and Infinity*, p.34.

⁹¹ *OM*, p.99.

⁹² One way to resolve this is offered by Hamilton (2013), who connects the notion of 'repetition' back to Schelling's theology. If one accepts this genealogy, however, Coleridge's subsequent radical distancing from Schelling makes these sections seem abortive in relation to his later philosophy.

outward to work with, otherwise its products could never be truly distinguished from the private, idiosyncratic reconstructions of the fancy. This also gives a new significance to Coleridge's description of the primary imagination as a 'repetition'; just as the infant repeats and internalises the personhood that it learns from the mother, so the imagination repeats and externalises the world that it is granted by God. In detailing how reason emerges as the reverence for the invisible, the *Opus* also provides the link for how the subject is able to reflect upon the products of the imagination conceived as ideal, noematic features of intentionality. This conception of the noema commits one to the view that, as Dagfinn Føllesdal puts it, 'phenomenological reflection is...not a special way of looking or using our senses; the objects grasped in phenomenological reflection are... abstract and nonperceivable'.⁹³ Although the imagination's primary function is ostensibly one of bringing reality into conscious comprehension, Coleridge's argument in the *Opus* demonstrates the extent to which this comprehension is always structured by the boundaries between the sensible and invisible. When the imagination is made to confront the impossibility of its dissolving, diffusing and dissipating activities, this is an indirect reflection of a point made by Levinas, that 'all knowing qua intentionality already presupposes the idea of infinity, which is preeminently *non-adequation*'.⁹⁴

Emphasising the status of intentionality as 'non-adequation' links to the second topic that invites consideration in relation to the *Opus*: the poetic symbol. Most notably outlined in *The Statesman's Manual*, the symbol functions as a way in which ideas can be presented through the exercise of the imagination.⁹⁵ Unlike its accompanying concept of allegory, which is merely 'an abstraction from the objects of the senses', the symbol 'is characterised by a translucence of the Special in the individual or of the General in the Especial or of the Universal in the General'.⁹⁶ The account of the mother and the child offered in the *Opus* exactly follows this chain of elevation, grounding 'shape' (the individual) in 'form' (the general) in order to arrive at 'principle' (the universal).⁹⁷ Rather than abstracting from the empirical particulars of the mother's physical appearance, the salient point is that the child is able to discover personhood as an idea which binds these particulars together. A further stipulation of a symbol is that 'it always partakes of the Reality which it renders

⁹³ Føllesdal, 'The notion of Noema', p.78.

⁹⁴ *Totality and Infinity*, p.27.

⁹⁵ *LS* p.30. For further analyses of the Symbol in Coleridge's thought cf. J. Robert Barth, *The Symbolic Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1977), Reid and Perkins.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *OM*, p.134.

intelligible'⁹⁸, which is equally vital for the mother-child relation, as the possibility of the ethical relation is predicated on the reality of the mother's personhood. This distinction is summarised by Mary Ann Perkins: 'the symbol, unlike the allegory which merely *points* to a unity of appearance and ideality, *is* an inward unity of the objective reality of the universal idea and the subjective apperception of that reality expressed in a particular form.'⁹⁹ This is referenced in the epistemological sections of the *Opus*, where Coleridge comments on 'the importance of distinguishing the subjective necessity of apprehending an object with a form from the objective necessity of a form in the object, as the ground of its characteristic phaenomena'.¹⁰⁰ Despite his emphasis on the antecedence of objective form, he nonetheless goes on to note that both subjective and objective must be thought of as 'co-present'.¹⁰¹ Since the aim in the *Opus* is to trace a line of thought away from experience and towards reason, the emphasis is placed on distinguishing the two; if, however, the aim was to show how is possible for the forms of reason to manifest within experience, the prime candidate to achieve this would be the poetic symbol.

Interpreting the imagination and the symbol through the lens of the *Opus* also has implications for conceptualising how the latter is apprehended by the former in a hermeneutical context. This reconnects to the description analysed in chapter three that was identified with the activity of the philosophical imagination, 'that reconciling and mediatory power, which incorporating the Reason in Images of the Sense, and organizing (as it were) the flux of the Senses by the permanence and self-circling energies of Reason'.¹⁰² The imagination's activity reproduces a union of *idem*, the same in the shapes of the senses, and *alter*, the other in the form of invisible ideas of reason, that is first realised in the face of the mother. In light of Coleridge's dictum in *Biographia* that 'an IDEA, in the highest sense of that word, cannot be conveyed but by a symbol', one might well describe the mother not only as the ground of all symbols, but as an archetypal symbolic figure herself, providing the first relation with invisible alterity from which all others take their cue. Framed in this fashion, the symbol illustrates the non-adequation of conscious intentionality *par excellence*; it does not lend reality to ideas by combining them with images, but in a much more subtle way demonstrates how reality *per se* rests on an invisible relation which the image can never encompass. A further element that connects the symbol with the *Opus* is the role played by faith as a meditator

⁹⁸ *OM*, p.134.

⁹⁹ Perkins, *Coleridge's Philosophy*, pp.48-9.

¹⁰⁰ *OM*, p.128.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*.

¹⁰² *LS*, p.29.

of the philosophical. Symbols, according to one of Coleridge's notebook entries on the topic, 'are mere empty figures of speech unless they are encountered by a 'Being seeking to be self-conscious'.¹⁰³ As Anthony Harding explains, 'the other is known, not internally of course, but through a symbol: and Coleridge is here interested, not in the intrinsic meaning of the symbol as such, but in its relation to that which perceives it.'¹⁰⁴ This places significant emphasis for the symbol's apprehension onto the reader or critic, presenting a fruitful analogue between the 'implicit faith' fostered in the infant mind and the fully matured 'poetic faith' that accompanies the willing suspension of disbelief. In the case of the latter, the objective elements of representations are decentralised in order to facilitate an apprehension of the invisible ideas of reason which govern their mode of appearance. Apprehending symbols in this manner, as Perkins observes, 'is not an act of faith in opposition to reason, but the very birth of reason itself'.¹⁰⁵ Far from being a dogmatic disposition, the argument traced through the mother-child relationship shows how this same sense of faith as an awareness of an unrepresentable alterity not only structures the capacity to treat other subjects as persons, but that this experience itself is the transcendental condition for self-consciousness and objectivity.

As was noted at the beginning of this chapter, Coleridge's subordination of consciousness to conscience in his later philosophy creates a strong divergence from Husserlian phenomenology. This divergence is indicative of Levinas's own ambivalent relationship with this kind of phenomenology, which he sees as fundamentally unfit to adequately comprehend the true alterity of the Other.¹⁰⁶ Conversely, however, Levinas also states that 'Husserlian phenomenology has made possible this passage from ethics to metaphysical exteriority',¹⁰⁷ since in pursuing a totally self-contained system of objectivity based in consciousness, one is eventually brought to a consideration of the experiences of interpersonal ethics that rupture this aspiration. Ignoring this complicated relationship with the Husserlian tradition of phenomenology would be to ignore 'the central fact that much of Levinas's work is devoted to constructing a theory of the subject'.¹⁰⁸ Understanding how the *idem et alter* dynamic at the core of the *Opus* can be reintegrated into the poetic treatment of consciousness outlined in *Biographia* shows how a similar journey through consciousness can

¹⁰³ CN II, 3026.

¹⁰⁴ Harding, *Coleridge and the Idea of Love*, p.120.

¹⁰⁵ Perkins, *Coleridge's Philosophy*, p.51.

¹⁰⁶ *Totality and Infinity*, p.27.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.29.

¹⁰⁸ Haney, *The Challenge of Coleridge*, p.178.

still inform an understanding of Coleridge's philosophical outlook. Taken in isolation, the arguments offered in *Biographia* outline a conception of philosophical criticism modelled on a transcendental analysis of consciousness, but this in itself is prevented from acquiring any strong metaphysical significance by the statement that neither subject nor object can be afforded any definitive privilege as a philosophical starting point. Coleridge restates this point in a letter to Tulk, where he points out that what is offered in *Biographia* is 'a sketch of the *subjective* Pole of the Dynamic Philosophy; the rudiments of *Self*-construction'.¹⁰⁹ Whilst it would be charitable in the extreme to suggest that the fragmentary *Opus* offers the comprehensive grounding to *Biographia* that Coleridge envisioned, the way in which alterity becomes developed as a constitutive element in the apprehension of Ideas is certainly significant. By presenting conscience as the precondition of consciousness, the whole notion of self-construction is shown to be dependent upon the encounter with alterity. In a footnote to the conclusion of *Biographia*'s second volume, Coleridge defends the legitimacy of metaphysics within literature with the following characterisation of the former's aim: 'Know thyself: and so shalt thou know God, as far as is permitted to a creature, and in God all things'.¹¹⁰ The *Opus* represents Coleridge's most concerted effort to demonstrate this same interrelation between self-knowledge and divinity, and the fact that Coleridge's accounts of conscience and faith still begin within the realm of experience demonstrates how consciousness can come to apprehend its own limits through symbolic thought. A vital corollary of this insight is that, if a symbol allows for the transition from finite consciousness to infinite reason and divinity, the reverse must likewise be true: allowing the truths of metaphysics to be referred to, in a carefully cultivated manner, within finite human symbols. In this sense, far from undermining the philosophical status of consciousness, the *Opus* represents Coleridge's final concerted effort to unlock its potential as a repository for metaphysical truth.

¹⁰⁹ *CL* IV, p.737.

¹¹⁰ *BL* II p.240*.

Conclusion

The attempt to sketch Coleridge as a proto-phenomenological thinker naturally involves its own fair share of struggling to idealise and unify, which, accordingly, is indicative of its own kind of impossibility. Whilst the conclusions of the previous chapter indicate how a potential genealogy of the symbol connects Coleridge's conception of poetic critique into something resembling a final philosophy, this presentation raises as many questions as it resolves. If symbols communicate ideas through a relationship of translucent invisibility, it is unclear how this can then be re-communicated within the public discourse of literary criticism. Even if the individual critic is able to convince themselves that they have identified a genuine fusion of idea and image, this claim has little bearing without further ratification through the intersubjective standards of justification for what constitutes a valid claim to symbolic status. Whilst the philosopher might still be able to fall back on the Kantian security of a canon of transcendental logic, the distillation of this logic into the literary realm means that deduction must inevitably give way to discussion. Despite Coleridge's best efforts to transcend the court of public opinion, establishing the critic as what Jerome Christensen calls 'a curate of the word'¹, his critical system nonetheless remains inextricable from the vagaries of human communicative practices.² This difficult boundary between the private philosopher and the public critic is a prime example of one of Perry's 'muddles', the traversal of which opens up a separate discussion concerning the intersection of Coleridge's socio-political thought and his philosophy of language.³ Rather than pursue this extensive excursus here, the final considerations of this study will instead return to the question with which it began: what is experience? Having at least built up a reasonable sketch of Coleridge's own explorations of this question, it is worth briefly considering these in light of some contemporary issues in philosophy of mind, as well as their implications for the study of aesthetics, to allow for a glimpse of Coleridge's continuing philosophical relevance.

¹ Christensen, *Blessed Machine of Language*, p.16.

² An exploration of this how this communicative element is addressed in Coleridge's thought has been offered by Tim Milnes, with a particular focus on the *Logic* (pp.145-88). It also connects to a discussion between 'esoteric' and 'exoteric' philosophising explored by Vigus (pp.125-35).

³ In addition the work of Christensen and Milnes, some notable explorations of this include Hamilton (*Poetics and Coleridge and German Philosophy*), who explores the latent progressive radicalism in Coleridge's notion of 'desynonymisation' as well as the mythological possibilities inherent in the concept of tautegory for historically situated symbols to convey ahistorical ideas, Haney, who examines the ethical relation between reader and text in Coleridge through a Levinasian and Gadamerian lens, Leask who outlines Coleridge's conception of the clerisy as an institutional and ideological antidote to a perceived crisis of cultural and spiritual authority, and James McKusick (*Coleridge's Philosophy of Language* London: Yale University Press, 1986), who traces Coleridge's desire to outline a criterion of 'naturalness' as a 'persistent element' (p.1) in his linguistic thought by which poetic expression might ground itself semiotically.

On the whole, Coleridge's philosophical views do not fare particularly well when being transposed into the twenty-first century. It cannot be denied that the view of consciousness identified throughout this study is one that is markedly out of step with the modern conception of the conscious mind as a biological product of random natural selection rather than divine creation. As such, the task of understanding the mind now resides far less with philosophers and far more with neuroscientists and evolutionary biologists. The task of bringing Coleridge into line with this naturalistic conception of the human being had been admirably attempted by David Ward, who offers a novel analysis of how his thought intersects with modern evolutionary theory.⁴ However, Ward himself is well aware of the limitations inherent within this exercise, noting that Coleridge's 'habit of mind was always to idealise and Platonize, leading him to conclusions which were at a tangent to the direction in which science was developing and had to develop'.⁵ While in a broad sense this conclusion is certainly right, there are nonetheless certain elements of Coleridge's thinking about the mind, which this study has sought to highlight, that retain a significance in philosophical discourse to this day.

The runaway success of physicalist approaches to understanding consciousness, at least in terms of replicable results and predictive capacities, means that a materialist ontology is a much easier sell in the early twenty-first century than it was in the early nineteenth. As Thomas Nagel sceptically observes, '[t]he physical has been so irresistibly attractive, and has so dominated ideas of what there is, that attempts have been made to beat everything into its shape and deny the reality of anything that cannot be so reduced'.⁶ Towards the end of the previous century, however, several important arguments emerged to question these materialist orthodoxies about the status of experience. One of the most prominent, put forward by David Chalmers, centres around a distinction between 'easy' and 'hard' problems of consciousness.⁷ Amongst the so-called 'easy' problems, Chalmers includes questions such as 'How does the brain process environmental stimulation? How does it integrate information? How do we produce reports on internal states?', all of which he argues are

⁴ David Ward, *Coleridge and the Nature of Imagination* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013). For a general introduction to Darwinian literary criticism, cf. Brian Boyd, 'Literature and Evolution: A Bio-Cultural Approach' *Philosophy and Literature*, 29.1 (2005), pp. 1-23.

⁵ Ibid. p.208.

⁶ Thomas Nagel, *The View From Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.15.

⁷ David Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind: In search of a Fundamental Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). Variants of Chalmers challenge to materialism appear in earlier works, such as Nagel's 'What is it like to be a bat?', *The Philosophical Review*, 83.4. (1974), 435-450, and Frank Jackson's 'Epiphenomenal Qualia' in *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 32.127 (1982), 127-136.

conceptually separate from the one ‘hard’ problem: ‘Why is all this processing accompanied by an experienced inner life?’⁸ Whilst the traditional methods of natural science continue to make progress on the ‘easy’ problems, Chalmers claims that the ‘hard’ problem forces one to confront the radical inability of contemporary scientific frameworks to offer an adequate explanation of how physical systems give rise to first-personal experiences.⁹ Indeed, when Chalmers asks the question ‘How could a physical system such as a brain also be an *experiencer*?’¹⁰ the challenge is the same as Coleridge lays down to the materialism of his own day: ‘And how came the *percipient* here? And what is become of the wonder-promising MATTER that was to perform all these marvels by force of mere weight, volume and motion?’¹¹ Whilst Chalmers and Coleridge take their respective questions in very different metaphysical directions, they are united by the former’s candid statement that ‘if a physicist or cognitive scientist suggests that consciousness can be explained in physical terms, this is merely a hope ungrounded in current theory, and the question remains open.’¹²

Coleridge’s overall relationship to this modern renaissance of thinking about consciousness is something of a mixed bag, a fact that is well illustrated by comparing him with one of its more outspoken contemporary figures: Galen Strawson. On the one hand, Strawson defends a rich, complicated form of phenomenology, of precisely the kind that Coleridge does. Thus, for example, when he claims that ‘the phenomenological character of our experiences is not just a matter of sensory character but also of cognitive character, so that we need a *cognitive phenomenology* as well as a sensory phenomenology’¹³, the two seem very much on common ground. Moreover, Strawson excoriates what he describes as ‘the dream of giving a reductive analysis of the experiential in non-experiential terms’, which he argues ‘amounts to denying the existence of experience’.¹⁴ On the other hand, Strawson remains committed to form of physicalist monism, essentially a modern equivalent to Spinozism, which states that everything which exists must be describable in the terms of physics. The combination of these commitments leads him to defend a cautious form of panpsychism — the belief that experience is a fundamental physical property of

⁸ Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind*, p.xii.

⁹ David Chalmers, ‘Consciousness and its place in nature’ in *Blackwell Guide to Philosophy of Mind*, ed. Stephen Stich & Ted Warfield (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

¹⁰ Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind*, p.xi.

¹¹ *BL* I, pp.134-5.

¹² Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind*, p.xiii.

¹³ Galen Strawson, *Real Materialism and other essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.15.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.54n⁶.

the universe akin to energy¹⁵. Far from the flight into speculative spirituality that it might initially seem, Strawson's position reflects a serious consideration of the difficulties of framing experience within the natural world. This argument confirms the point made by Tim Crane that 'there is no *a priori* definition of the "physical" beyond "the subject matter of the science of physics", which itself has no *a priori* meaning'¹⁶, which goes a long way to explaining how Strawson is able to pull off the conceptual gymnastics with the term that he does. The charge of strangeness here is similar to that which accompanies Fichte's theory of the self as act, demonstrating how subjectivity continues to pull philosophical categories far beyond the scope of standard models of thinking. Coleridge may ultimately only possess a thin connection to these modern theories of consciousness, but it is his commitment to forms of description that prioritise and defend the status of qualitative experience in the face of reductionism that is as relevant today as it was two centuries ago.

If one pursues this theme into the more specific realm that Coleridge sought to vindicate by means of these forms of description, that of the aesthetic, one finds positions that constitute far more thoroughgoing connections to the central features of his account. One of the best examples of this is provided by the pragmatist philosopher Joseph Margolis, who argues that the failure of contemporary scientific understanding to reduce first person experience to a third person perspective ought, contra Chalmers and Strawson, to prompt the realisation that no such reduction was possible to begin with.¹⁷ According to Margolis, the philosophical strategies of many modern aesthetic theories still suffer from an adherence to what he calls a 'piecemeal reductionism': a form of understanding which tries to identify the significance of art in terms that are translatable into the view of the world offered by natural science. These piecemeal strategies ignore the wider failure of large scale reductions, which Margolis argues ought to be taken seriously as an indication that an entirely different philosophical vocabulary is needed when dealing with subjects characterised by these irreducible features:

If reductionism fails, then the irreducibly novel forms of meaning, signification, symbolic and semiotic function, representation, expression, creativity, interpretation, and the like—

¹⁵ cf. 'Realistic Monism: Why Physicalism entails Panpsychism' in Strawson (2004). This should not be mistaken for the view that everything physical is a subject of experience, but rather that the property which allows certain parts of reality (human brains for example) to become subjects adheres within nature at a fundamental level.

¹⁶ Tim Crane, *Elements of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.47.

¹⁷ Joseph Margolis, *The Cultural Space of the Arts and the Infelicities of Reductionism* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2010).

which by a term of art, I collect as the forms of “Intentionality” (the defining powers of the cultural world) — also define the sui generic forms of human utterance in all their variety.¹⁸

Whilst what Margolis is calling ‘intentionality’ here cannot be cleanly identified with the technical Husserlian term that has guided the interpretation of Coleridge, its relationship with the processes of artistic production constitutes a significant continuity, particularly when it is later glossed in distinctly Coleridgean terms as ‘the self’s intelligibilizing power’.¹⁹ In the absence of a satisfactory reduction of these concepts into a technical scientific vocabulary, the onus must remain on a macro-level cultural and phenomenological analyses that take meaningful expression, rather than predictive causality, as their basic currency. If works of art are necessarily rooted in these cultural and subjective forces of intentionality, as Margolis convincingly argues they are, this leads to the conclusion that

the analysis of the arts... and the analysis of the human mind cannot be disjoined at any point—for reasons so fundamental that they rarely take explicit form in the body of the best-known and most admired theories; and... only when these separate enquiries are rightly united can each part succeed in its own way.²⁰

For all its shortcomings in the face of scientific and philosophical history, Coleridge’s vision embodies one such explicit articulation of this position. If bringing his philosophy, or something like it, into the twenty-first century requires that his view of the world be brought into unfavourable contrast with the wealth of intellectual advancements that have succeeded him, it also bears pointing out how scientific and humanistic studies alike continue to struggle with the same challenges he sought to meet.

¹⁸ Margolis, *Reductionism*, p.10.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid, p.2.

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